



# NAMDEV

LIFE AND PHILOSOPHY

PRABHAKAR MACHWE

PUBLICATION BUREAU  
PUNJABI UNIVERSITY, PATIALA





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**Punjabi University, Patiala**

**1990**

**Second Edition : 1100**

**Price : 45/-**

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***Published by Sardar Tirath Singh, LL.M., Registrar Punjabi University, Patiala  
and printed at the Secular Printers, Namdar Khan Road, Patiala***



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the Punjabi University, Patiala which prompted me to summarize in this monograph my readings of Namdev's works in original Marathi and books about him in Marathi, Hindi, Panjabi, Gujarati and English. I am also grateful to Sri Y. M. Muley, Director of the National Library, Calcutta who permitted me to use many rare books and editions of Namdev's works. I have also used the unpublished thesis in Marathi on Namdev by Dr B. M. Mundi.

I have relied for my opinions on the writings of great thinkers and historians of literature like the late Dr R. D. Ranade, Bhave, Ajgaonkar and the first biographer of Namdev, Muley. Books in Hindi by Rahul Sankrityayan, Dr Barathwal, Dr Hazariprasad Dwivedi, Dr Rangeya Raghav and Dr Rajnarain Maurya have been my guides in matters of Nath Panth and the language of the poets of this age. I have attempted literal translations of more than seventy *padas* of Namdev. A detailed bibliography is also given at the end. I am very much obliged to Sri Nand Kumar Shukla who typed the manuscript.

Let me add at the end that my family-god is Vitthal of Pandharpur, and what I learnt most about His worship was from my mother, who left me fifteen years ago.

New Delhi  
26th December, 1967

PRABHAKAR MACHWE



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## INTRODUCTION (First Edition)

The Punjabi University, when it formulated its plans and programmes for the celebration of 500th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak, coming off in 1969, thought of bringing out biographies of three saint-poets of India, namely Sheikh Farid, Namdev and Bhakt Kabir, whose hymns are found in the *Adi-Granth* side by side with the compositions of other *bhaktas* and the Gurus. In the editorial scheme of the *Adi-Granth*, the hymns of Namdev are given a place immediately after the compositions of the Gurus and Bhakt Kabir, followed by the hymns of Ravidas, Farid, Trilochan, Sain, Pipa, Dhanna and others, in the musical measures (*ragas*) represented in the book.

The holy *Adi-Granth* or *Guru Granth* of the Sikhs was compiled in A. D. 1604 by Guru Arjan (A.D. 1581-1606) the fifth spiritual successor of Guru Nanak. This was probably the first scriptural book of its kind in the history of India, which collected in one volume the outpourings of the poetic minds of saints and devotees belonging to different faiths, castes, creeds, regions and times. This sacred *Granth* preserves for posterity an authentic representative anthology of devotional hymns of Indian saints of the medieval age. It was but proper that Namdev, the most outstanding saint-poet of Maharashtra should have been assigned an honoured place in this holy *Granth*.

Namdev was a prolific poet. According to a legend, he composed nearly a billion verses, though some of these are attributed to other members of household. The various stages of the development of thought through which the saint passed are amply reflected in the verses he composed. The 61 hymns of Namdev<sup>1</sup> inculded in the *Guru Granth* pertain to the period when he had attained enlightenment through *Nirguna bhakti*, or devotion to the formless Absolute. In a truly devotee's style, Namdev describes his relation with the Lord as that of a wife to her husband, or that between the beloved and the lover :

1. M.A. Macauliffe's translation at pages 101 to 137.



I am a mad women and God is my spouse;  
It is for Him I decorate myself elaborately.

This strand of thought is present throughout the *bhakti* poetry. Guru Nanak's depiction of the various moods of the 'bride' in wait of the lord's affectionate hug, in his *Baramaha Tukhari*, not only is a study in aesthetic appeal of poetry, but heightens the effect of devotional sentiment of the individual going through the text.

## II

Bhakt Namdev preceded Guru Nanak by two centuries, if the consensus of testimony by historians and researchers be accepted. They put his year of birth as A.D. 1270, though some scholars place him in 1370, or even 1390. Dr. Prabhakar Machwe, in his present work has sifted extensive material on this point; he has also presented, in brief, the arguments offered by the supporters of various dates of Namdev's birth, but the internal evidence on which he has relied points to October 26, 1270.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, there is a controversy about the place of the *bhakta's* birth. Whereas certain scholars hold Narasi Bamani, a village in the district of Satara, as the place of his birth, others think it is Pandharpur. Still others put it as a village in Prabhani District or Gokulpur, or even Gwalior.

There is an interesting legend about the parentage of Namdev too. It is said that the infant *bhakta* was found floating in a shell (sippi), in the river Chandrabhaga. Another story gives the name of a widow, Lacchmavati, as his mother, who got him without a human father, and the child was brought up by Bamdev, father of the widow. But the majority of historians and biographers mention the names of Damashet and Gonai (or Gonabai) as the father and mother of Namdev. A number of legends associate supernatural powers with the name of Namdev, and describe many a miracle happening to him. But legends, are after all legends and cannot take the place of history. The present work does acquaint the reader with the legendary tales, current in Marathi literature, about Namdev. However, the author has also tried to give a historical treatment to all the valid facts about the *bhakta's* life.

2. The Punjabi biographer of Bhakt Namdev, Giani Khazan Singh, also agrees to 1270 as the year of Namdev's birth.

He has also tried to interpret his teachings as rationally as possible. As the reader would see, Dr Machwe has done his job splendidly well.

The author has translated a good number of Namdev's Marathi and Hindi *abhangas* into English. A selection of 35 of these compositions, drawn from various sources, has been included in this book by way of specimen. In addition, the entire set of 61 hymns of Namdev, as available in the *Guru Granth*, and rendered into English by Dr Macauliffe, has been appended at the end.

### III

Namdev is held in equal esteem in Maharashtra, his home State, and in the Punjab, where he is stated to have spent nearly two decades of his later life. Some of his Punjabi followers believe that the *bhakta* breathed his last at Ghuman, District Gurdaspur. However, most of his biographers are inclined to believe that he had returned to Pandharpur before he died. The story of his life, as also his composition unmistakably point out that Namdev led the life of a householder; the name of his wife was Raja bai, he had four sons and a daughter; his four daughters-in-law and a maid, Janabai, also lived with him. He was so passionately absorbed in the love of *Vitthal* (*Bithula* in Punjabi) that he attained complete detachment from the worldly life and became completely in tune with the Divine.

Namdev devoted his life to the uplift of lowly and to the eradication of suffering and anguish from men's minds; he laid stress on the purity of human conduct, rather than empty ritual and superstition, and deserves a place of honour among the saint poets whom the Indian people revere. Guru Arjan, the fifth Nanak, showed his veneration for the Bhakta by including his hymns in the sacred *Granth* he compiled. This monograph, which is being brought out on the occasion of the 500th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak, amply brings out the identity of teachings of the Sikh Gurus and the medieval Bhaktas—a fact which needs to be stressed on such occasions.

Punjabi University  
Patiala  
May 28, 1968

Kirpal Singh Narang  
Vice-Chancellor



## CHAPTER I

### L I F E

On 29th April 1892, a biography of Namdev was published in Marathi entitled *Namdev Charitra*, written by Madhavarao Appaji Mulay. It had in the beginning appreciative opinions by greatmen like Justice Madhav Govind Ranade, Sir Ramakrishna, Gopal Bhandarkar, Sir Gopalrao Hari Deshmukh (Lokahitavadi) and Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Tilak wrote as follows :

“That great devotee of God who composed nearly a billion poems and pioneered the path of Devotion for the common people, and carried them to their destination successfully, should have been left neglected till now and no authentic biography of him should be available, is a matter of wonder. Namdev has in his *Abhangas* given the account of his forefathers and has also indicated important matters like the time of birth and death and the account of his contemporary saints. Nobody had attempted to collect all those *Abhangas* at one place, and so the biographies of the pioneers of this popular Path of Devotion were not reliably recorded. The present author has taken great pains in collecting all this information. One can determine the dates of his birth and death and also of his contemporaries like Dnyandev, Nivrattinath, Sopandev and so on.”

“The period of Namdev is very significant in the later history of India. At that time not only in Maharashtra but throughout India these saints laid the foundation of the Path of Devotion and showed the direction. Dnyandev, Kabir, Nanak and such saints of different provinces met and discussed many common matters, which are given in this book. As a devotee, poet and pioneer of the Path of Devotion, Namdev's life has a triple importance.”

In a critical introduction to this book in Marathi Sri Ranganath Hari Bhalunkar has taken a resume of various controversies about the life of Namdev from 1892 to 1952. I attempt to give a summary of his findings below :

Sri Bharadvaj—Under this pseudonym Shivrambua Eknath Bharade wrote 16 articles in the paper 'Sudharak' (Reformer) from Poona. The first article was 'Were Dnyaneshwar and Namdev contemporaries' and was published on 5.12.1898. These sixteen articles were published during 1899. Sri Ajgaonkar, Huparikar, Baskar, Abhyankar, Keshavarao Damle and others tried to refute Bharadvaj's arguments in 'Kesari'. In the 'Mumbai Vaibhava' of Solapur, a 'Jidnyasu' ('Curious') also replied and so did K. N. Athalye, editor of 'Keralakokil'. Sri Shripatibua Bhingarkar wrote a long series of articles which was later published in book-form in 1900. Bharadvaj maintained that Dnyaneshwar the author of *Dnyaneshwari* and *Amritanubhava* was different from Dnyaneshwar the author of *Abhangas* or songs. He thought that the first Dnyaneshwar was probably of 1212 Saka and the latter was in the fourteenth century of Saka era. The author of *Dnyaneshwari* was a Saivite and belonged to the Nath sect and his father and preceptor or guru was Nivrittinath, while the composer of songs was a Vaishnava and his parents were Vitthalpant and Rukmini, and his guru Navrittinath who was also his brother. The songster Dnyaneshwar had one more brother Sopanadeva and a sister Muktabai. The place of birth and 'Samadhi' of the first Dnyaneshwar was Apegaon; about the second nothing was definitely known, but he took 'Samadhi' at Alandi. The second Dnyaneshwar went on pilgrimage with Namdev.

Sri Bharadvaj did not accept the clear evidence of the birth of Namdev given in one poem clearly indicating : (1) Saka 1192 (2) Month of Kartik (3) Fortnight : Shukla (of the bright moon) (4) Date : Ekadeshi (5) Day : Sunday and (6) the name of the *samvatsara* PRABHAVA. Bhingarkar saw the old manuscripts of Namdev in Pandharpur and said that it is not 'Prabhava' but 'Pramod' which is also current amongst the Varkaris. But Bharadvaj did not leave his obduracy and maintained that 'Prabhava' was only 1309 Saka and so Namdev was of a later period and could have never seen Dnyaneshwar. But if 'Pramod' is accepted as the correct textual entry, then all the six points



referred above are proved to be right.

Prof. Vasudev Balwant Patwardhan and Sir Ramkrishna Bhandarkar accepted Bharadvaj's version and placed Namdev in the fourteenth Saka century, while Pandit Panduranga Sharma, L. R. Pangarkar, S. V. Dandekar, Dr. R. D. Ranade, Dr. S. G. Tulpule decided that the date of birth of Namdev was Kartik Shuddha Ekadeshi of 1192 Saka. The year is thus A.D. 1270. This date is also corroborated by references in songs of contemporary saints like Gora the potter, Savanta the gardner, Narhari the goldsmith, Visoba Khechar, Chokhoba the sweeper, Banka, Sena the barber, Parisa Bhagawat and others. Similarly the dates of the 'Samadhis' of the brothers of Dnyandev are given by Namdev as Saka 1218 and 1219. So Bharadvaj's arguments do not stand any ground.

One of the testimonies in determining the age of any poet is his language. Bharadvaj argued that the language of Namdev seems to be more modern than Dnyaneshwar's and so there must be a difference of at least a century between both. But in this matter, the fact that should be noted is that written language and language carried by oral tradition should be differentiated. As Namdev's songs have references to *Yavana* and there are also *Yavani* (foreign) words, Bharadvaj argued that Namdev must have been after the establishment of Muslim power in Maharashtra. Muslims entered Maharashtra for the first time in A.D. 1318. So Namdev may be belonging to the fourteenth century, this is what Bharadvaj reiterates. "In the *Dnyaneshwari* there is not a single foreign (*Yavani*) word." But as Namdev travelled with Dnyaneshwar in north India, he might have seen the broken temples and icons and so he referred to them in his works. As Namdev mentioned these, it does not mean that Muslim power must have established itself in the South at that time. Namdev was propagating his message for fifty-four years after Dnyaneshwar's *samadhi* (end). The first Muslim attack on Paithan was in 1288 and the battle of Devagiri was fought in 1296. Namdev was continuing his work even after the establishment of Muslim power in Maharashtra. Hence Bharadvaj's arguments do not have any meaning.

The meeting of Namdev and Kabir also proves that Namdev

was earlier. The dates of Kabir, as given by Bharadvaj are A. D. 1380 and 1420, which also stand to correction in the light of later researches. There are two legendary tales in Namdev's life that Panduranga (God) came in the form of a Malanga and a Pathan to test his dear devotee. Bharadvaj argued that how could it happen if Muslims had not entered Maharashtra. But Muslims did trade with South India and Konkan in early days, and individual traders had even settled down in those parts.

Nanak and Namdev met in the fourteenth century and so Namdev could not be earlier, is another argument put forth by Bharadvaj. Bhingarkar replied that there was a Nath-panthi *sadhu* named Nanakswami and he had a debate with Gahininath of Nath-panth about *Siddhi* and it is recorded in a work entitled *Gahini Pratap*.

Bharadvaj also maintains that Namdev and Changdev were not contemporaries. But Namdev's autobiographical *Abhangas* do mention that Namdev and his son were present when Changdev had taken 'Samadhi'.

The miracle of making the dead cow rise on her feet is mentioned in Nabhaji's *Bhaktamal* of 15th century A. D. and in the Granth Sahib where under Namdev-Vani the *pad* is mentioned "Sultanu Puchhai sunube Name." Bharadvaj says that this incident happened in A. D. 1367, when Bidar was established. V. K. Rajavade has published a *Bakhar* (historical record) about Mahim, in which in the sixth chapter it is mentioned that Devagiri was attacked by the Padshah in A. D. 1296 and Namdev was worshipping and giving religious discourses in Pandharpur.

The meeting of Bhanudas and Namdev is another point put forward by Bharadvaj in favour of fixing the date of Namdev one century later. What Bharadvaj assumes is that Bhanudas was the grandfather of Eknath. Bhingarkar says that there is no evidence for such assumption. Namdev had met a Bhanudas who had a brother named Suryadas. But the grandfather of Eknath had no such brother.

In 1913 Sir R. G. Bhandarkar wrote in his 'Vaishnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious systems' :

"The date assigned to the birth of Namdev is as we have seen, Saka 1192, that is A. D. 1270. This makes him



a contemporary of Jnandev, the author of the *Jnandevi*, which was finished in A. D. 1290. But the Marathi of the latter work is decidedly archaic, while that of Namdev's writings has a considerably more modern appearance. Namdev's Hindi too looks more modern than that of the thirteenth century, when the poet Chanda flourished. It is difficult to say what is this due to. But it appears probable that the traditional date of Namdev's birth (Saka 1192) has been pushed backwards and that he is represented as a contemporary of Jnandev. We have seen in the former section, that Nabhaji in naming the successors of Vishnuswamin places Jnandev earlier and Namdev as later. If we are to judge from Namdev's Marathi and Hindi, his date must be put later by about a century.

"Some conception, however, of the time when Namdev flourished may be formed from strong and definite sentiment as to the futility of idol-worship, which his Guru is represented (in one of the hymns, viz., *Pashanacha dev bolechena kadhi*) to have expressed. Khechar, or Visoba Khechar as he is usually called, appears to have been an uncompromising opponent of idol-worship from the accounts given of him in the existing biographies. All previous writers including Ramanuja, as well as a great many that followed, excused idol-worship in some way or other. If then Khechar's attitude towards it was definitely hostile, he and his pupil Namdev must have flourished when the Mahomedan influence had for the first time become very powerful. The Mahomedans established themselves in the Deccan in the beginning of the fourteenth century of the Christian era, and their hatred of idol-worship must have taken about a hundred years to make its way into the understanding of religious Hindus."

"But a more direct evidence for the fact that Namdev flourished after the Mahomedans had established themselves in the Maratha country is afforded by his mention in a song (No. 364 Tukaram Tatya) of the destruction of idols by the 'Turaks' i. e., Turks. The Mahomedans were often called Turkas in early times by the Hindus. Namdev, therefore,

probably lived about or after the end of the fourteenth century."

"It will thus be seen that the date of Namdev's birth given with such details is quite wrong. Unfortunately the historical spirit has by no means been the distinguishing feature of the intellectual life of early Indians, and we often confuse different persons together, and attribute to one what belongs to another. Some such confusion must have taken place in the present case."

Hari Narayan Apte gave Wilson Philological Lectures in 1922 and remarked :

"The divergence between language used in literary composition and that used in ordinary conversation, is always very great and will always continue to be great. In fact, it very often becomes a necessity. When a people grow into a nation and consequently the area, over which their language spreads, grows in extent, time works up differences and one and the same language is naturally divided into several dialects. Take the case of Marathi at the present time. How many dialects do you think it is divided into ? Broadly speaking there are (1) Marathi in the Deccan (2) Marathi in Konkan (3) Marathi in Berar and Central India and (4) in Southern India. These are the four very broad divisions. But there are numerous sub-divisions under every one of these. In all Dr. Grierson has collected specimens of these dialects and sub-dialects which belong undoubtedly to Marathi. Now when such process of divisions and sub-divisions takes place in the history of a language and there arises a necessity for a language in which the educated people belonging to the several provinces can write and communicate their thoughts to one another, such a language automatically or by a natural process comes into existence. That is the reason why there has arisen a literary Marathi, a Marathi in which writers belonging to the several provinces write their compositions."

Bhalunkar argues that *Dnyaneswari* was studied amongst a comparatively more literate and Sanskrit-knowing Brahmin class, whereas Namdev's hymns and songs were mostly carried by oral tradition from generation to generation. V. L. Bhawe has pointed to old Marathi words in Namdev's autobiographical *Abhangas*.



There may have been many interpolations and modifications in the copyists who wrote the *Abhangas* of Namdev.

The objection raised by Sir R. G. Bhandarkar was as follows :

“Similarly another youngman not fully acquainted with the critical method said that Namdev and Dnyandev were contemporaries but that the difference between their languages was due to mistakes of successive scribes. He thus believed that the scribes could reconstitute the grammar and lexicon of a language, forgetting to ask himself why the marvels effected by the scribes in the case of Namdev should not have been effected by them in the case of Dnyandev himself, whose language they had not altered.”

It was replied by Sri Panduranga Sharma (*Chitramayajagat* in Vol. 13, No. 8) whose real name was Raosaheb Panduranga Dnyaneshwar Kulkarni—“Dnyaneshwar's philosophical writings are cryptic and in *Sutra*-form meant for the sophisticated. Such a compact poetic composition does not render itself to any corruptions. Namdev's *Abhangas* were sung by commons people, they are outpourings of devoted illiterate persons, which later became more popular songs. For this reason, Namdev need not be punished by being relegated to a further century. The more any form of poetry is popular the more is the likelihood of its being modified and altered.

Dr. Nicol Macnicol also repeals what Bhandarkar said and maintains in the preface to his *Psalms of Maratha Saints* :

“The language of Namdev's verses is much more modern than that of the Dnyaneshwari. So that though the tradition gives his date as from 1270 to 1350 the probabilities are that Sir R. G. Bhandarkar is right in placing him a century later.”

But Prof. Vasudev Balwant Patwardan delivering his Wilson Philological Lectures in Calcutta in 1917 replied to these arguments cogently and said that the language of the first part of Marathi Mukundaraja in his *Paramamrita* appears to be even more modern than that of Dnyaneshwari :

“Reading this passage carefully we find that it reads almost like a modern passage. Excepting the forms in ‘u’ of

the nominative singular which, however, are not frequent in the passage and the forms *yaya* and *apleni* there are no traces here of old Marathi."

He further concludes :

"...the fact remains that whatever the vocabulary, the grammar of the language of Nama's work *as it is presented* in the various Gathas is far too modern to admit of Nama's being a contemporary of Dnyaneshwar. If further research brings to light a copy of Nama's works which are nearer the Dnyandevi in archaism of grammar, idioms and vocabulary, I shall be glad to modify my statement. But till then I cannot help to conclude that an interval of more than a century divides the author of Dnyandevi and Namdeva."

Dr. J. M. Farquhar wrote an article on "The Historical position of Ramanand" in the Journal of Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland in April 1920 and proved Namdev as a contemporary of Ramanand in A. D. 1430. He argues that Ramanandi sect was popular from 1299 to 1410 and so the meeting of Namdev and Ramanand is doubtful. He quotes Bhandarkar and Macnicoi's translations in support. Pandit Baleshwar Prasad gave A. D. 1423 as the time of Namdev in *Sant Bani Sangraha*. Bhalunkar replied that the term 'doubtful' is a mere guesswork. Baleshwar Prasad based his opinion on *Bhaktmal* of Nabhaji and *Mishra Bandhu Vinod*. Nabhaji's work is not very reliable as it is based on hearsay evidence of Sadhus. Sri Panduranga Sharma has replied to these arguments fully in the 'Historical position of Namdeva' published in the Annals of the Bhandarkar Institute Vol. 8 (page 335-341) published in 1927.

The argument about the difference in the languages of Dnyaneshwar and Namdev does not stand scrutiny. Bhalunkar quoting Rajwade gives details of the reasons of such linguistic variations due to differences in place, time, sex and caste of the speakers. Sri M. G. Bartakke wrote an article in *Lok Shikshan* (May 1940) and found out so many archaic and obsolete Marathi words in the *Abhangas* of *Tirathvati* by Namdev. If this happens even after so many centuries, no doubt there existed much difference in Marathi spoken at various places and at various levels of society in the thirteenth century.



The statement that Dnyaneshwar and Namdev did not influence each other is refuted by Panduranga Sharma in 1925 in an article published in the Vol. 5, Nos. 1-2-3-4 of the quarterly of Bharat-Itihas-Sanshodhak Mandal.

In conclusion what is said in the Wilson Philological Lectures in 1916 by V. B. Patwardhan stands very much unrefuted :

"Here we have the Romance of a light that never was on sea or land, of a dream that never settled on the world of clay, of love that never stirred the passion of sex; a wonder that never was wrought by flesh and blood; of a mystery that never was revealed in caverns subterranean, of supernatural power that never found abode in giants and monsters. Here is the Romance of Piety; of faith, devotion, of the surrender of the human soul in the love, the light and the life of the ultimate Being. Here is the freedom of the Freest of the Free man. It is Romance of Bhakti spiritual love that we have here. That is the body and the soul of the great flood of poetry that starts with Namdev.

"It is the heart's song to the heart. It is the outburst of the contents of the heart under excitement when the heart is touched or stirred, or thrilled or roused into passionate life.

"To come back to the main subject. Out of it and its exposition poetry sprang a new school of Lyric poetry that flowered in Namdeva. He, Namdeva, is the first...as far as the history of the Marathi Literature is known to us...and perhaps the foremost poet of the new school. Dnyandev is certainly, potentially greater. But in actual accomplished work Namdev is perhaps unsurpassed.

"We now come to the importance of Namdeva as Maker of Marathi Literature. Examine the Works of Namdeva and we find that the most poetic verses from him are those where he speaks from his heart and reveals either the dark spots present there of the struggle of the conflicting impulses; or again the ardent consuming desire he feels for communion with God or again the impatience and the distressing suspense verging on despair. These lyrics of a relentlessly tried soul are as passionate as they are intense and

sincere. It would not be easy to parallel the following verses in romantic concept, in homeliness of diction, in truth of feeling, and in lyrical intensity.

- (1) Tujhya charnache sutatan anusandhan  
jail majha pran tatksani (Avate, 338)  
When I leave the quest of your feet; let my life be forsaken suddenly.
- (2) Tujhiya payi majhya mane dili Budi—344  
In your feet my mind is absorbed
- (3) Ata honar te ho kan Pandhrinatha—345  
Now let anything happen O Pandhrinatha
- (4) Jaywant aso Lakhshimicha Chuda—306  
Victory to the husband of Lakshmi
- (5) Tu may mauli mhanoni aas keli—307  
You are the Mother and so do I hope.

He is the founder and the best representative of a new genre of lyrical poetry and has so immensely influenced his successors.

## II

The life of Namdev is surrounded by legends, like the lives of so many other saints. I am attempting a summary of these legends as given in the first Marathi-printed biography by Sri Mulay.

There was a terrible jungle in the spot where present Pandharpur is situated. It was called Dindirvan. A *deshasth* Brahmin named Pandalik used to live with his parents and serve there. His father was Janudev and mother Satyawati. At the age of five, his thread-ceremony took place, and for sixteen years he studied Vedas and scriptures. He was married and carried on the burden of the family. But he did not care for his parents. If he served his parents, his wife would castigate him. He ill-treated his old mother who used to do all the domestic work. He gave the best clothes and food to his own wife and treated the mother as a maid-servant. Tired of his maltreatment the parents decided to go on pilgrimage to Kashi. Pandalik per-



mitted them to do so. The wife of Pundalik also insisted to accompany. On two horses rode Pundalik and his wife while the old parents walked behind, groomed the horses and lived on alms. One day they reached the *Ashram* of Kukkutaswami. There Pundalik saw some fairies in human form who came in the morning and cleaned the Ashram and disappeared. They later admonished him as a very sinful person as he maltreated his parents. The fairies were the four Holy Rivers. Kukkutaswami was the incarnation of Shrivana who served his blind parents by carrying them on shoulders in a sling. King Dashratha unknowingly hurt him. As his desire was unfulfilled he came back to this Earth. "When you have your parents, why do you go on pilgrimage. Better serve them " Pundalik made his parents ride the horses and made his wife walk behind. He served his parents for twelve years. Even Indra was afraid of him and tried his best to disturb his penance.

Once Narada came to Pundalik and told him the story of the importance of Dindirvan. The brick which was lying there was in fact Indra who was suffering under a curse as he had deceived and raped Ahalya. As Moon was an abettor in this conspiracy he was also cursed to become a leper. Narada told Pundalik to offer this brick to Krishna when he came to this forest.

Sri Krishna remembered Rukmini and came in the form of a cowherd in her search. He saw her and stood almost struck by her presence. Putting both of his hands resting on his waist he watched her. Rukmini made great fun of this cowherd and even spoke harshly. Then Krishna showed to her his real form. And this re-incarnation of Vishnu was called Vitthal (*Veet* means a brick in Marathi, *Thala* is the place). Pundalik did not care to see whether God has come and stood there near him, he was so much absorbed in the service of his parents. Later he begged pardon and called him Vitthal. God was pleased and gave him this boon that whosoever would utter Vitthal constantly, and take bath in the holy river Chandrabhaga, would be saved from the bother of the cycle of births.

Thus Pundharpur became a holy place and it was for Pundalik that Sri Vishnu came there. This form of Sri Vishnu, namely Vitthal, became the deity worshipped by Namdev.

Namdev's ancestry begins with Yadushet, who was a tailor by caste. The word 'Shimpi' in Marathi is used in *Bhaktmal* as Chheepa. The legend that he was born out of a mother-of-pearl or a shell is due to the verbal similarity between 'Shimp' and 'Shimpi'. He was the dweller of a village name Narasi Bamani near Karhad on the banks of Krishna. In the line of Yadushet, Namdev was the son of Damashet and Gunai or Gonabai. They had only one daughter Aubai and no son for a long time. He was born in the morning of Kartik Shukla Ekadashi in Saka 1192 (i. e. A. D. 1270). At the time of his birth, considering him to be the incarnation of Sanatkumar) Indra, Kuber, Varuna, Brahma, Shiva, Vishnu rained flowers on the earth and the firmament echoed with the sound of heavenly and divine music.

At the age of two Namdev started repeating the name of Sri Vitthal. At the age of five when his teacher asked him to write on the slate 'Onama...' (Om Namah) he wrote 'Sri Vitthal'. At the age of seven he took stones as songs and repeated the same name of God and danced in ecstasy all day long. God himself came to accompany him in dance. God was repeating the name of Shiv as 'Har-Har'! while Namdev uttered 'Hari-Hari'! Namdev asked him about this difference between Shiva and Vishnu. God said both are the same.

Namdev was given some food (Naivedya) to be offered to the god Vitthal, in absence of Damashet. He went to the temple and insisted on Vitthal to take it, otherwise Mother would not eat. At his request God took the food. When his father returned, he did not believe in this story and so he was taken to the temple and shown this miracle. Sri Vitthal even drank the milk offered by young Namdev, though it was hot. The legend further gives the dialogue of the mother of Namdev and God, who had burns in his mouth, but He gave some other excuses.

At the age of eight, Namdev was married to Rajabai the daughter of Govindashet Sadavarte. On the first Divali after the marriage Namdev wanted God to come home and take only bath early in the morning, so he went to the temple. God Vitthal agreed to do so if Namdev stood in his place. God also warned him not to stir and take the candy which the devotees offered. Namdev's parents took the God home and Namdev stood there



in God's place as his shadow. When devotees started offering him candy and butter, he started eating. Some real devotees realized that the idol was Namdev and not God Vitthal.

In the biography by Mulay a detailed account is given of Gora the potter coming and trying to test the heads of various saints by patting them, as if they were unbaked pots. He reported to Dnyaneshwar that Namdev is raw and he is not fully baked as he has not found any Guru. So Namdev went out and found a Malang who had a bag, a tall cap, a begging bowl, a crooked stick and a horn and was accompanied by a dog (which was in fact the wise-cow) and in his right hand there was a smoking-pipe. Later this Malang converted Savata. Namdev refused to renounce his religion and so he tried to run away. But God was testing Namdev in this form of a Malang.

Then He took the form of a Pathan and ordered for Namdev's arrest for forced labour. Namdev asked Savata the gardner who was with him, to run away. Namdev ran upto the temple and was terribly upset. Later God revealed that in the form of Pathan He had tried to take him away. There are other stories of God coming with Rukmini in the form of a Muslim trader who told him "Go to the temple of Aundhya Nagnatha where you will meet your guru Visoba Khechar." Namdev went to this place stopping at Aarne, where he met Savata, and then at Dhamangaon where he met Kurmadasa and later at Ter where he met Gora the potter.

Visoba Khechar tried to test Namdev by assuming the form of a leper. He kept his dirty foot over the Nagnath image and asked Namdev to remove it and to place where Shiva did not exist. Namdev tried to do so but to his great surprise such a place was not to be found. Whichever direction he turned Khechar's foot, the Shiva image spang up, Namdev was convinced of the greatness of his guru Khechar after this miracle. Visoba asked Namdev to carry the old diseased guru on his back, out of the dark temple. Namdev was bathed in blood and mucid matter and was disgusted. Later on Visoba the guru showed his real healthy handsome form, and proved that the way to God is a hard and strenuous way.

One month after this initiation at the hand of his spiritual

preceptor, Namdev was asked to go and collect dues from a nearby village. While returning on the banks of the Man river in the village Manjari he baked his bread and kept it near the oven and went to fetch water. A dog came there and picked up the bread and started running. Namdev thought that it is God Vitthal who is testing him and so he went running after the dog with little utencil full of clarified butter, thinking that if the dog would eat the dry bread, it would suffer from a stomachache. Namdev had reached the stage when he considered every animate being as having a divine spark within it. God resumed his form and asked Namdev: "How did you recognize me?" Namdev said that he knew Him as his guru Khechar had taught him.

Namdev got a son who was named Narayan. He had three more sons and a daughter. There was the devoted maid servant Janabai in his house who was the daughter of a Shudra Dama and his wife Kurund. She was the incarnation of the same woman who was Manthara in Treta (the age of Ramayan) and Kubja in Dvapara (the age of Krishna). Damashet maintained her as a member of his family.

On the bank of the river Chandrabhaga some devotees were saying that Valmiki had composed a billion shalokas. Namdev heard this and vowed that he would also compose verses in that large number. Out of these Abhangas many were composed by God himself and by many members of his family.

In the second part of this traditional biography, Mulay gives the story of his mother asking Namdev to do some business. So he went to Dada Savkar, a *deshasth* Brahmin money-lender of Pandharpur, to borrow from him some capital. Dada Savkar was a miser. Yet God gave him the good sense to lend Namdev two thousand 'hons' (gold coins) without any bondage or mortgage. Namdev thought that the best investment would be feeding the Brahmins. So a large party was arranged. Every-one was invited to dine at Rakshasabhuvan. Namdev's party went on for five days. On the last day he fed everyone in the village. Dada Savkar was scared that instead of investing his capital, Namdev was squandering all the money. On the last day Dada Savkar was brought to the spot and Namdev told him that the money spent was not by him but actually by Dada Savkar. He was made to say the



*Sankalp* or the prayer-offering to God.

Dada was terribly annoyed and insisted on getting back all the money with interest. Namdev asked him to come to the river and go with him into deep waters upto his naval. Dada was afraid but he was dragged and was made to dive. Here Dada Savkar saw a great miracle, *darbar* of the Mughal king. There was so much gold and such jewels, pearls, rubies and diamonds that he was flabbergasted. Dada was taken to this court and made to feel himself as one of them. He stole one of the golden bars. But when he came up on the level of water, everything disappeared. He was so much scared that he left all the article given by the king to cook for himself. Then he was asked "Did you receive all the money you had lent to Namdev?" Dada said, "Well, my life was saved and that is enough."

On one of the Kartik Shukla *ekadashis* God tested Namdev in the form of an old famished Brahmin who came in the form of a beggar and asked Namdev for alms. Namdev said that he could not give him food on *ekadashi*, which was a day for fasting. Hearing this, the Brahmin swooned in the courtyard and gave up his life. Namdev was so much shocked that he offered his own life, as he thought that the death of the Brahmin was due to his not giving him food. Namdev ordered for two pyres being arranged on the bank of Chandrabhaga including one for himself. The Brahmin came to life and showed his real form as God Vitthal.

Raka was a Gujarati potter in Pandharpur, who was a devotee of Vitthal and lived with his wife Banka and daughter Vanka. One day by mistake three kittens were put into fire, as they were sheltered by the mother cat in one of the earthen pots kept ready for baking. When the fire was set, the cat came and wept and moved around that fire. Banka and Raka were so much aggrieved that they begged of Panduranga, and after the third day when the pots were taken out of fire, to their surprise the kitten came out alive and unscathed. He was so much influenced by God that he left his business of a potter and decided to live as a mendicant. One day his daughter Vanka was taking her bath in the river Chandrabhaga where Namdev's daughter Limbabai was washing her clothes. The dirty water of the washings polluted

Vanka. Limbabai was angry when Vanka admonished her. Limba said "O you potter's daughter, why should you have such ideas of untouchability?" Vanka said "Well your father worship a God with a form. My father worships a formless God and so I think I am polluted by you," Limba went and told the story to Namdev, who went and asked God about it. God and Rukmini took Namdev to the forest where Raka was roaming with his wife Banka collecting faggots. God tested him asking Rukimini to put her golden bracelet below drywood. Raka thought that is better to hide it with dust, lest his wife got tempted. The wife who has following, saw the golden bracelet shining, and put some more dust to hide it fully, lest the daughter, who was following, got tempted. The daughter saw it and was very sorry for such parents who still thought about the difference between gold and dust. Namdev saw this other worldliness and non-attachment of Raka, Banka and Vanka and was convinced of their saintlihood.

Another story of Gora, the potter of Terdhoki is given by Mulay. He was the one who had called Namdev rather raw or half-baked after patting the heads of all of the saints. One day while Gora was pounding the clay for preparing his pots, he was so ecstatically absorbed in the name of Vitthal that he did not see that his young infant came crawling and got mixed up with the earth and was dead. The mother had gone out to fetch water. When the mother returned and saw the dead child pounded up in the clay she raved with anger and pain. As her words disturbed Gora's devoted singing, he rushed to be at her with the potter's wheel. But she took the name of Vitthal, and on his name warned him not to touch her.

Later he married the younger sister of Gora's wife. The father-in-law requested him to treat the younger sister in the same manner as he treated the elder one. Gora's had no interest in household. But one day when he saw that one night his hands lay on his wife's body he repented, and in that frenzy that he could not keep his vow of continence, he cut both of his hands with a sickle and sat praying. God came there in the form of a guest-potter and asked him not to worry. God and his wife Rukmini, with Garud as the donkey, did all the potter's selling business. The pots of Terdhoki with the signs of conch, discus,



lotus were found in the market at Pandharpur. Everybody was surprised at the skill of the potter who was handless. One day when Namdev was singing and giving his congregational sermon (Kirtan), he suddenly asked Goroba along with other devotees to raise the hands and praise God. Goroba had no hands and so he was ashamed. Namdev asked him to clap his hands in whatever manner he liked. Suddenly the miracle happened. As flowers come to trees in the spring season, Goroba got his palms and hands. The elder wife of Gora requested Namdev to get her son back. Namdev asked her to call him. And lo, and behold, the child came crawling. Everybody was surprised at Namdev's divine power.

One day Gonai had cold and she was coughing. Namdev was asked to bring the bark of a particular bramble-like medicinal tree from the forest. Namdev went with his axe and while he tried to cut the bark, to his great surprise he saw red juice flowing out of the trunk. He was so much pained that he hit his own foot, and started peeling out his own skin of the same size as the bark. God came and rescued him when he bled profusely and fell unconscious. God touched the tree and Namdev's foot and the bark was restored, so was the skin brought back to the foot and the wounds were healed. Gonai's coughing was also cured.

At Bedar there was a Brahmin who had taken a vow that he would bring Namdev from Pandharpur and listen to his devotional music. At first Namdev refused to leave Pandharpur, but at God's request he agreed to go there. He was accompanied with so many devotees that the king of Bedar thought that an army is coming to invade him. He ordered his chief minister Kashipant to arrest Namdev. With the help of twenty-five guards he got him arrested. The Sultan killed a cow and asked Namdev to make her alive, or otherwise the Sultan would convert all the people with Namdev into Muslims. God came to the rescue of Namdev. Namdev heard the voice from Heaven and put the head of the dead cow near her carcass. She was rejuvenated. As the devotees of God were troubled by the king, black, yellow and red snakes were suddenly seen all over the town and king's people were bitten by them and they died. So Kashipant, the minister came to Namdev and requested him to save the king's men.

Namdev was sympathetic and he forgave the minister and the king.

At Paithan while Namdev was singing and travelling, his companion Kurmadas, who had no hands and feet, expressed his desire to go to Pandharpur. God came in the form of a Brahmin and took him along with Dnyandev and Namdev. In the way they stopped at Arenbhende where Savata the gardener was worshipping God. God told Savata that those two people, Dnyaneshwar and Namdev were the thieves who were after him and so he wanted some place to hide. Savata took his gardener's knife, opened his own stomach and asked God to hide there. He wrapped a blanket around his stomach. Now Dnyandev and Namdev began to search for their companion. They saw Savata in ecstasy as God was literally near his heart. Namdev was very much afraid that he had lost the company of God. God came out of Savata's belly and thus made Namdev realize that the pride of any devotee as the only and the greatest was false. At Laul Kurmadas took *samadhi*, after meeting the two saints and God. At that spot every year on Ashadhi and Kartiki *ekadashi* big holy fairs are held.

The story of the miracle of the touchstone is still more interesting. Parisa Bhagvat was given by God a stone which worked like a miraculous thing because it turned every metal which came in its contact into gold. Parisa Bhagvat's wife Kamalaja was a friend to Rajai the wife of Namdev. Rajai told her friend that Namdev was not doing any business and did not earn, so she had to suffer from grinding poverty. Kamalaja secretly loaned this miracle-stone and Rajai got all her iron and brass utensils turned into gold and sold them. When Namdev came home and saw such a change in the household with all new things and so much of good food and clothing, he was surprised. Rajai innocently told the story of the stone. Namdev asked her to show him the stone. While Rajai went inside the house to cook the dinner, Namdev took this stone to Chandrabhaga river and threw it into water. Parisa Bhagvat learnt of this and was very angry. He asked Namdev to bring his stone back. Namdev dived in the water and brought many sand-stones and asked Parisa to pick his *Parls* (the touchstone) out of them. To his great surprise all those stones carried the same quality. Bhagvat was convinced of his



power and asked Namdev to bless him. He said "O Namdev, saints like you are the real touch-stones. Whomsoever you touch will be turned into gold. You are a living philosopher's stone."

Then the stories about Janabai being helped by God Vitthal are given in this book at length ; how God returned Namdev to his mother and how he came in the form of Keshavshet and gave to Namdev's wife and mother ample gold coins.

In the third part of this book the same stories about the travels of Dnyaneshwar and Namdev are repeated. Sri Nivrattinath the elder brother of Dnyaneshwar, also accompanied them. They met the saints Savata, Kurmadas, Bhagvat, King Jagatpal and his guru Kukundraj and Gora on the way. He reached Kapildhara where a Brahmin Kamalakar and his wife Shuddhamati requested them to honour their house and invited them to dine. At first they refused but at their five-year old son Gopal's insistence Namdev agreed. When Namdev and his friend went to dine, God tested Kamalakar assuming a snake's form and biting his son Gopal who went to fetch fuel. After this there was further resting when the saints insisted on Kamalakar and his wife's eating with them. even when they knew that Gopal was dead. Namdev made the dead rise. Thus Gopal and his parents were reunited.

The pilgrims went further from Dharateerth to Aundhya Nagnath where they met Haripal, the hunter. He was a highwayman, yet he was a devotee of Vithoba. He left Jagpal Sheth and his wife unhurt as they told him that they were going on pilgrimage to Pandharpur. This Sheth and his wife were God and Rukmini in disguise, who tested this devotee, and gave him a gold armlet to be used for feeding the guest-saints.

At Nagnath, Namdev was insulted by the Brahmin priest and driven out of the temple. Namdev started singing and the miracle of the door of the temple turning to his side is described. Such a miracle is also described in Kabir's life.

Then they went to Pratishtan (Paithan) where they met Bhanudas. Here the bad Brahmins troubled him by saying "Namdev and friends are of lower castes, and so they had no right to be saints. They are all fake." Upon this another miracle happened and the God of gods Indra descended down with hundreds of singing devotees with nine lakh ochre flags. The critics and deriders were put to shame. Those who came to scoff

remained to pray.

They went to Devgiri and stayed at Sajjan Kasai (the butcher). Then they went to Ellora, Gharishneshwar, Kacheswar, Shukreshwar, Panchvati, Tryambakeshwar, Dwarka, Dakorji and Junaghar. At Junaghar they met Narasi Mehta. There are many *abhangas* composed during this journey. They contain metaphysical discussions as well as moral discourses. In this work the further places of pilgrimages mentioned are Allahabad. Bharadvaj Ashram, Ayodhya (where they met saints Pipaji), Chitrakut (where they met Tulsidas) and then reached Benaras. Here they met Kabir. Obviously in this account there is lot of historical inaccuracy and anachronism.

The story of Kabir's wife giving hospitality to these saints, even though Kabir was extremely poor, is given in this book. Kabir's wife went to a trademan to borrow the necessary provisions. The grocer was lascivious. He promised to give her the necessary things on the conditions that she satisfied his lust. She agreed and told the story to her husband Kabir. She promised to go to the grocer after having fed the guest-saints. In the meanwhile, it started raining heavily. In the mud and slush Kabir himself carried her on his shoulders to that grocer. The grocer was shamed. The grocer came to see and bow down before Kabir, Namdev, Nivrittinath and Dnyaneshwar; and he also got his salvation.

It is said that Dattatreya, Matsyendra and Gorakh all the three great gurus met Nivritti, Namdev and Dnyaneshwar. Thus Namdev stayed for a week in Benaras. They went to Marwar and while crossing Rajasthan Namdev was very thirsty. Dnyaneshwar went to bring deepest water from a well for him. This miracle happened at Koleri, that God himself made the well overfill with water.

They returned to Tera where they met Gora again. Then they went to Bijapur where Sena the barber and Dadu the weaver met them. They went to Ghataprabha, Malaprabha, Rishyamuk parvat, Kishkinda nagari, Tungabha and Kumarteerth, the place of Kartikswami. Here Nanakswami was also travelling alone. Namdev enquired the cause for this. Nanak replied that he needed no disciples, the five elements were there. Nanakswami gave food to these saints. Namdev miraculously brought the idol



of Kartikswami to dine with them. Nanak was surprised to see this. Then Namdev and others departed to Vyankatesh, Mallikarjun, Kirti Ramraja and Remeshwar. Here they met Maruti (Hanuman). They went to Tamraprani, Karvir, Virat nagari (Nepal) and reached back Alandi and Dehu. At Dehu they blessed Vishwambhar the first person in the line which bore Tukaram. They all returned to Pandharpur via Bhimashankar.

In the fourth part of this book the ritual of feeding the Brahmins and the feast after pilgrimage is described. In this part are 21 pages consisting of 58 *abhangas* from Namdev. The fifth part described the *samadhi* of Dnyaneshwar (37 *abhangas*), the *samadhi* of Sopendevar and Vateshwar (23 *abhangas*), the *samadhi* of Changdev (26 *abhangas*), Muktabai's *samadhi* (19 *abhangas*), Nivrattinath *samadhi* (26 *abhangas*).

In the sixth part, the *samadhi* of Namdev is described. In the seventh part Tukaram is described as the re-incarnation of Namdev and his life is given in details. The work ends with a long and elaborate family-tree. This is in brief the summary of the first authentic biography in Marathi of Namdev. It is a rare book now, not easily available. Obviously it is full of a devotee's faith in many extra-mundane happenings.

### III

Books in Hindi which are the sources for Namdev's life are discussed in the second part of the introduction to a very authentic research work *Sant Namdev Ki Hindi Padavali* edited by Dr. Bhagirath Mishra and Dr. Rajnarain Maurya. I attempt to give a summary of this section of that chapter.

In Hindi *Parichai* books are many, written by Anantdas, Sathuradas, Bodhedas, Khendas Raghunath as, Rupdas, Jay Gopal Ramrup and Krishnanand. Out of these Anantdas and Krishnanand's *Parichai* give Namdev's biographies. There is no earlier reference to Namdev than in Anantdas's work. It was written in A. D 1587. The other source is Nabhadass's *Bhagtmal* which was composed later in the *Parichai* by Anantdas the following details

are given of Namdev's life : Namdev was the first saint in *Kaliyuga*; he gave milk to the idol of god and god drank it; the temple turned on all sides; the quarrel with Badshah; he brought a dry cot and bed through water; God came and thatched the roof of the hut where Namdev dwelt; God tested him by assuming the form of a dog and eating away his bread; Namdev's insistence on making the stone-image of God laugh; his making the dead bull arises; God coming as a Brahmin begging for food from Namdev on Ekadashi and Namdev's insistence on not giving food, subsequently Namdev's readiness to be burnt with the Brahmin after his death; God praising Namdev; a richman in Pandharpur gave charity to Namdev, but he only accepted as much as *tulsi*-leaf and all the gold and riches proved lighter in weight than the leaf, and so on.

The second *Parichai* is found in Nagari Pracharini Sabha (manuscript No. 1400) composed by Krishnanand. The name of Anantdas is given on it, but it is not writting by him. Dr. Triloki Narain Dixit has believed it to be so. But at the end of the work Krishnanand's name is clearly given. In this work the life of Namdev is given as follows, in the first *Parichai* : Bowing before Ramanand, Anant Das Dudhadhari Krisanadas, Kilh and other saints; description of *Kali*; Namdev's living in Pandharpur, his father's living in Vairoja, Namdev taking the *naivedya* (offering of food) to the temple, God's drinking milk at his insistence. In the second *Parichai* : God praises Namdev, devotees of all castes listen; Namdev advises the Brahmins on not maintaining caste-differences; Brahmins driving away Namdev from the temple, Namdev's praying God and the turning of the door of the temple. In the third *Parichai* the following stories are given : death of a bullock of the chariot, Namdev's making it alive; God's thatching his roof, God's taking away the bread from Namdev by becoming a dog; God's showing him the form with four hands, God's testing him in the form of a hungry Brahmin, begging on Ekadashi and later dying; Badshah's coming to kill Namdev by putting him under elephant's feet. The elephant became inactive; bringing a dry bed through water and so on.

In Nabhadas's *Bhaktmal*, five miracles by Namdev are



mentioned. Priyadas has written a commentary in verse on this book of lives of devotees. In it the same miracles are repeated. Even in *Bhaktamala Ram Rasikavali* the same stories are given in more details. There is no novelty about them.

Histories of Hindi literature mention Namdev and give his biography; Garsa De Tassy's 'Story of Hindi Literature' was published in 1839 in Paris. Its Hindi translation is published by Dr. Lakshmisagar Varshneya in 1953. This work repeats the accounts given in Bhaktmal and Anantdas's *Parichai*. In later works like *Shivasingh-Saroj* there is no mention of Namdev. In Garsa De Tassy's account Rev. J. Stevenson is quoted who maintained that Namdev was born in A.D. 1278 in Gwalior and he is the older than Prakrit poets. A tailor picked him up and so he was called a tailor. In *Kavi charita* the father of Namdev is given to be Jnandeva. He was the first disciple of Pundalika. He composed numerous hymns and wrote one book *Haripath*. There was a maidservant named Janabai at Namdev's place, who also composed many *abhangas*. He died in A.D. 1328. Garsa de Tassy has mentioned that Namdev died of his will, by getting himself cremated along with the holy Brahmin.

The second history of Hindi literature is by Dr. Abraham George Grierson. There is only one sentence in this history about Namdev that his verses are found in Sikh Granth.

In the history of Hindi, in *Mishrabandhu Vinod* Namdev is considered to be a Vaishnav saint, disciple of Janeshvar, earlier than Vallabhaswami, who wrote poetry in nearly 1478 A.D. His work *Namdev ki Bani* was dated 1682 and listed in a magazine devoted to manuscript research. His language is given as mixed Brijbhasha, by Mishra-Bandhu. It has a dash of *Khari Boli*, Bihari, Avandhi dialects also. He preached unity of Ram and Rahim, some kind of monotheism. Yet he did not discard idol-worship. He later became a worshipper of formless God. He was born in *Samvat* 1192 is what Mishra-Bandhu wrote, but probably he meant the *Saka* era. Many of the facts given in this account are not correct.

The later histories are by Ramachandra Shukla, Shyamsunder Das and Dr. Ramkumar Verma, which mention Namdev.

Ramchandra Shukla gives *Samvat* 1192 (1134 A.D.) and *Samvat* 1272 (1214 A.D.) as Namdev's dates of birth and death. But he gives a very significant point : "Namdev in Maharashtra and Ramanand in Madhya Pardesh preached Nirguna Panth which discarded differences in high and low castes and declared equal opportunities to every man in his devotion to God. In Namdev's earlier works worshipping Saguna God, the language is traditional Brijhasha, but the later Nirguna worship is in a language influenced by Nath Yogis. (P. 65)

Shyamsunderdas has called Namdev the pioneer of the school of Nirguna devotion. Dr. Ramkumar Verma basing his estimation of Namdev on *Bhaktamal*, Guru Granth by Macauliffe and Dr. Bhandarkar, divided Namdev's poetry in three period :

- (1) Earlier works, when he worshipped the idol of Pandharinath.
- (2) Middle works, when he was emancipating himself from superstition.
- (3) Later works, when he saw God in everything; these works are in Guru Granth Sahib.

In some research theses in Hindi, Namdev has been referred to as in Dr. Pitambardutta Barathwal's "Nirguna School of Hindi Poetry." The story of Namdev as a highwayman was referred to in his work for the first time. So he mentioned that Namdev died in Ghuman. Pt. Parashuram Chaturvedi gave a more detailed account in his *Uttari Bharat ki Sant Parampara* (The tradition of saints in North India). He has proved that the Marathi saint Namdev and Namdev in Punjabi is the same. Chaturvedi quotes Macauliffe and says that Namdev at the age of fifty-five got disgusted of his family life and decided to stay in Ghuman in Gurdaspur. He went there via Bhatval. He had two disciples with him Ladha and Jalla, who later settled in Sukhlal and Dhariwal. Prof. Vinaya Mohan Sharma in his *Marathi Santon ki Hindi ko den* (Contribution of Marathi saints to Hindi) has written about Namdev, but he too had not seen all the 250 padas of Namdev found in Hindi manuscripts. Prof. Sharma also maintains that Namdev is the first poet of Nirguna school.

In a small book on Namdev written by Baba Balwant Rai



the account given about Namdev's travels in Puniab is as follows : He came to Bhutval in Amritsar district where he rejuvenated a dead son of a widow and named him Bahurdas. He spent most of his old age in Ghuman which was a desolate forest area in those days. He died there (*Unch te Unch Namdev Samdarshi*, p. 21).

Amongst the Marathi sources earlier than Muley's biography the first reference is in the *abhangas* of Janabai, who was contemporary of Namdev. She was brought up in Namdev's household. According to her songs Gonai, the mother of Namdev, got this son after a religious vow. Namdev's family had besides the parents and his wife, one sister Aubai and four sons and their wives, one daughter Limbai and the maidservant Janabai. God Vitthal thatched the roof of his hut. God tested him in the form of a Brahmin begging food of him even on an *Ekadashi* day. The Guru of Namdev was Sopandev.

In Mahipati's *Bhaktivijaya* (1750 A. D.) there are references to many miracles done by Namdev, which have been referred to above. In Morpant's *Aryas* there are references to Namdev's making the dead cow rise up. In Janardan Ramchandra's *Kavicharitra* (1860) which has been referred to by Garsa de Tassy at many places, there are the same facts : Namdev was born in Gokulpur in near Pandharpur in 1278 A. D. He lived on milk from the age of eight. Once Namdev went to forest to cut some wooden faggot but when he saw that the tree gave milk, he thought that it is almost like killing a human being. He became a devotee after this. He died after the age of fifty years.

Sri Vinayak Lakshman Bhawe thinks that the village Narasi Bamani where Namdev was born was near Sholapur and not Satara. There is the story of Namdev's coming under the influence of bad company and turning into a highwayman and later his change of heart after hearing the wails of a woman whose husband was killed by him. This event took place at Nagnath. Once Gonai, the mother of Namdev, went to Pandharpur to fetch him back from God Vithoba; instead of Namdev's return to his village, the whole family started living in Pandharpur. On Ashadh Krishna Trayodashi in *Shaka* 1272 (1350 A. D.) the whole family took *samadhi* near the temple of Vitthal in Pandharpur.

Devidas Lakshman's Mahajan's life of Namdev in verse is

more of a devotional work and has hardly any historical value. In Ajgaonkar's biography published in 1927 there is an attempt to give a rational explanation of many of the miracles which passed under the name of Namdev. He also gives the story of Namdev as a highwayman in details. In the *Gatha* there is one *pad* which is the source for this story.

P. N. Patalkar refuted the story of Namdev being a highwayman, saying that the said *pad* is an interpolation. In L. N. Joshi 'Life of Namdev' published in 1930 there is no new material. B. R. Hendre's Namdev gives his family tree. In L. R. Pangarkar's History of Marathi Literature (Part I) published in 1932, the author comes to some conclusions after examining all the available data and material : (1) Namdev's birth-place is Narasi Bamani in Parbhani district in Marathwada (2) After marriage and full family life he left village and stayed in Pandarpur (3) He travelled to Punjab and his *padas* in Hindi are also explained in this book.

Shankar Purushottam Joshi was the first person to write a book in Marathi named 'Namdev in Punjab'. This work deals with Namdev's travels in Punjab and his Punjabi disciples. He gives the period of Namdev as 1170 to 1350 and mentions all the miracles as given in previous biographies. His argument in favour of considering the Namdev in Maharashtra and in Punjab as one and the same is that in Panjab, Dehli and Rajasthan the name Namdev is used by all tailors. He has also given a translation of the sixty one *padas* in Guru Granth Sahib in Marathi.

In Dr. S. G. Tulpule's *Panch Sant Kavi* (Five Saint Poets) there is the refutation of considering Namdev a highwayman. He thinks that the said *pad* on which this story is based is a later addition. If Namdev would have been a decoit, Muktabai would have definitely referred to it. He thinks that all the *abhangas* given in Namdev's *Gatha* are not necessarily composed by him, but only six to seven hundred are his real compositions. Namdev had a talent to write biographically about Dnyandev and other. Namdev went in his later life to Punjab and spent 18 to 20 years there. He considers his dates as 1270-1350.

Darbar Committee Gurdaspur has published a booklet in English written by Baba Bhagatram B.A., B.T. He thinks Namdev was born in 1370 and died in 1450. There is another book publi-



shed by Darbar ommitec, Ghuman, written by Bansidhar CShastri. It gives the dates of Namdev as 1363-1446.

Thus about Namdev there is a great diversity of opinion on all matters like his birth-date, birthplace, parents, guru, travels and his death. We mention these views on the basis of Dr. Rajnarain Mauryas' book, in brief :

#### DATE OF BIRTH

(1) According to Namdev's *Abhangas* it is 26th October 1270. Dr. Ranade, Sri Pangarkar, and Dr. Tulpule support it. Hindi scholars Sri Parashuram Chrturvedi and Dr. Vinayamohan Sharma also accept it. Dr. Macauliffe also agrees. European historians J. C. Powel, Price and A. A. Macdonell and an Indian historian Dr. Ishwari Prasad support it.

(2) Dr. Mohan Singh Divana thinks Namdev was born in 1390.

(3) Dr. Bhandarkar, Prof. V. B. Patwardhan, Dr. Nicol Macnicol place him as born in 1370 (and died in 1450).

(4) According to Bhagatram he was born in 1370 and according to Bansidhar Shastri he was born in 1363. These two Punjabi scholars have given no evidence for these dates.

(5) Garsa De Tassy gives it as 1278 A. D.

Dr. Mohan Singh's argument is based on one *pad* in Guru Granth Sahib where a Sultan has asked Namdev to rejuvenate a dead cow. Sultan Ferozshah Khilji ruled Delhi from 1282 to 1296 A. D. Ferozshah Tughlak ruled Delhi from 1351 to 1388 A. D. but there is no reference to Namdev's coming to Delhi. Ferozshah Sultan Bahmani could be this Sultan who died in South India in 1422 A. D. The *pad* referred to by Dr. Mohan Singh is also found under the name of Kabir in another manuscript. So it cannot be a reliable source. The arguments about the language of Namdev as later than that of Dnyandev have been discussed in the first section of this chapter.

#### PLACE OF BIRTH

(1) Anantdas gives it Pandharpur. Mahipati also mentions the river Chandrabhaga near Pandharpur.

(2) Namdev refers to his own place as Narasi Brahmani in one *pad*. Dr. Bhandarkar refers it to be near Karad (Satara). Now this village is called Bhaye Narasingpur as Kole Narasingpur.

Muley, Pandurang Sharma, all Hindi writers and Macauliffe seem to agree with this.

(3) Most of the Marathi scholars think that Narasi Brahmani village is in the district Parabhani of Marathawada. This opinion was put forward by Keshav Ram Koratkar in 1926 in the historical research-journal of Poona. Ajgaonkar, Pangarkar, Bhawe and Dr. Tulpule support it.

(4) Ramchandra Janardan of *Kavicharitra* refers to Gokulpur near Pandharpur as the birthplace of Namdev.

(5) Garsa De Tassy mentions it to be Gwalior.

The last two opinions seem to be without any evidence. Dr. Rajnarain Maurya thinks that the second opinion is more correct.

#### PARENTAGE

Leaving aside the miracle-believer who think that Namdev was not born of human parents or was an incarnation of Sanat Kumar, Mahipati maintains Damashet and Gonai found this child swimming in a shell in the river Chandrabhaga. So Priyadas thinks that he was the son of a widow from a devotee Vamdev. Garsa De Tassy thinks that he was one of the children who was picked up. Janabai mention that Gonai got him as a result of a vow. All sources agree that Damashet and Gonai were the father and mother of Namdev, who had one sister Aubai. Namdev had four sons and one daughter.

The stories about Namdev's childhood are the same in all sources. But the incident of his being a dacoit and murderer has been refuted by Pataskar, as it is not mentioned in any contemporary verses about him, nor in any later verse-biographies or poetic references to him. In all the *Gathas* of Namdev only one *pad* published in a *gatha* after 1894 mention this incident. But even Muley who wrote his biography three years earlier, had not known of this *pad*. If Namdev's heart was changed and later he settled in Pandharpur, how could his deep devotion to Vitthal from his early childhood be explained. Ajgaonkar says that Namdev killed 84 cavalry men of the king; but how could such a heroic person remain unknown in history.

#### GURU

About his preceptor there are three opinions; Sant Dnyaneshwar,



Visoba Khechar and Sopandev. But Visoba Khechar seems to be the most correct answer, if one takes all the biographies into account. Janabai's reference to Sopandev, the younger brother of Dnyandev is merely figurative.

#### TRAVELS

About his travels described in his *Tirthavali* all biographers are unanimous. He went with Dnyaneshwar to several places in southern, western and northern India. His travel to Punjab was done in the last phase of his life.

#### DATE OF DEATH

About the *samadhi* of Namdev Parikha (or sa ?) Bhagvat gives Ashadh Shukla Ekadashi as the day. In Ghuman it is considered to be second of Magh. On this day there is a big fair held in Ghuman. Bohardas was supposed to be the successor of Namdev. Legends about this disappearance from his sleeping room and going to his mother in Pandharpur are not quite reliable. But very little evidence is there about these dates.

#### WORKS

There is no authentic edition of his works published as yet. The Maharashtra State Government had undertaken such a project five years ago but has not yet produced any authentic edition. One thing is certain that 2,500 *padas* in Marathi commonly attributed to Namdev may not be all composed by him. Some are by Vishnudas Nama, who may be another person. In Hindi nearly 234 poems are found, out of which two are also found to be in the name of Gorakhnath, and two under Kabir. The 61 *padas* in Guru Granth Sahib in Punjabi may be all by Namdev. Because of such variety and possibility of innumerable interpolations, Namdev's language has also many ranges; Marathi, old Rajasthani, Brij, Rekhta, Punjabi, Khari Boli have all entered in his poems. In one poem Kannada, Gujrati and Urdu are also used.

### IV

Dr. B. M. Mundi's thesis gives in details the arguments proving the Namdev of Maharashtra and Namdev of Punjab as one. In the introductory chapter in his thesis he has summarized his

findings as follows. He quotes Dr. Farquhar, Dr. Trump, Dr. Macauliffe, Dr. Mohan Singh, Dr. Wescott, Dr. Bhandarkar, Dr. Sharma, Dr. Ranade, Prof. Priyolkar, Principal Dandekar, Prof. N. R. Phatak, Dr. V. B. Kolte, Dr. S. G. Tulpule, Sri Pangarkar, Sri Bhawe, Prof. Patwardhan, Pandurang Sharma, Dr. Hazariprasad Dwivedi, Pandit Parashuram Chaturvedi, Dr. Barathwal, Dr. Govind Trigunayat, Dr. Vinayamohan Sharma, Sri Shyamsunderdas, Dr. Ramkumar Verma as scholars who have written for and against this debate of two Namdevs or one. His own logical questions are :

(1) After Dnyaneshwar's *samadhi* and after the death of all his friends and other members of his family, what happened to Namdev of Maharashtra ? Such a famous man cannot be lost in this manner ? Or did he spend his long life of 80 years merely in giving religious discourses and singing *Kirtans* ?

(2) Why did he not like to end his life after his lifemission was finished in Maharashtra, as he saw in the case of Dnyaneshwar ? The ideal of spreading his ideas to North was before him.

(3) There is no reference to Namdev in Maharashtra during these 54 years after the *Samadhi* of Dnyaneshwar. No saint-poet, not even Goda or Janabai have written anything. All the members of his family are said to have gathered only at the event of his *Samadhi*. How could it happen ?

(4) He was remembered in Maharashtra only after Ekanath. In Tukaram's dream-reference he is revived. How could it be so ?

(5) The description of his first travels is complete. But his second travel is hardly described in Maharashtra.

(6) If he would have died immediately after Dnyaneshwar, there would have been references to it in some Marathi contemporary writings.

(7) The miracle of his making a dead cow stand up, is referred to as an event two or three years before his death. — "Nama's mother was weeping" and when he was asked to change his religion, Nama said : "One who says so is not Nama's mother at all." Whether this event took place at Bedar, Delhi or Mandavgarh is no clear. But one thing is certain that Namdev was in travel and somewhere in North India, beyond Maharashtra.



(8) In one of his *Abhangas* there is a clear reference to : "In my last days I am in a distant foreign land. I have come to your feet, O Lord !"

(9) In this *Abhangas* there is reference to meeting his mother, which is also mentioned in the life written by one of his successors and published from Ghuman.

(10) In the *Abhangas* by Goda and Vitha there are clear references to "Nama has left Pandharpur", and "He has orphaned us".

According to Dr. Mundi, Namdev went to North India for the second time. Jalho, the carpenter (of Jalhan) was with him. There is also strong linguistic evidence to prove that the Marathi Namdev and Namdev in Punjab were the same. That he was a contemporary of Jayadev, Trilochan and Sena and so he could not be the same as the original Marathi Namdev, is a very lame argument by Dr. A.K. Priyolkar. There could be many interpolations : Kabir, Narasi, Meera, Kamal, Dadu, Pipa, Sena, Dharma, Nanak all refer to him as the same person with the same miracles as described by the Marathi saint-poets like Mahipati, Uddhava-Chidghan and others.

The similarity is in poetic content and expression. The Marathi saint-poet's sentiments are the same as those of the one found in Guru Granth Sahib With the only difference of Marathi and Hindi language, there is hardly any difference of idiom, which is one and the same. Even the figures of speech, the allusions and allegorical references are the same. He is referred to variously as Nama Pathak, Nama Swami, Namya Hari, Nama Keshvache, Nama Mukteshwar, Nama Yeshwant, Nama Vishundas, Krishnadas Nama, Namya Shivadas, Namadav and so on. But he is the same person according to this research work.

Dnyaneshwer died in Saka 1218, Savata in 1218, Sopan in 1218. Muktabai in 1219, Nivritti in 1219. Changdev in 1250, Khechar in 1231, Narahari Soner in 1235, Banka Mahar in 1240, Jagmitra Naga in 1252, Chokhe Mela in 1260, Joga Parmanand in 1260. Namdev took his *Samadhi* in Saka 1272. (A.D. 1350.) according to his daughter-in-law Ladabai

Lives of Namdev and Kabir have many similarities : the miracles of making a dead cow alive, making the dead Brahmin

rise, the welling up of the water in the river and ponds, the occupation of a weaver and printer of cloth, non-attachment to family and subsequent admonishing by their mothers.

In the lives of Namdev and Nanak the story of the turning of the temple on all sides and their asking of the direction where God may not be, so that they may turn their feet in that direction are similar. The story of Namdev and Sultan meeting is just like Babar and Nanak's meeting.

Many such stories are common between the lives of saints, which were mostly communicated through tradition.

In the Psalms of Maratha Saints by Nicol Macnicol, on, p. 15 it is said : "According to one account he bore, like many other saints, from his infancy the marks of sainthood. The first word he spoke was "Sri Vitthal"; he learned nothing at school, for he cared for nothing but kirtans ( services of song). That is one way in which saints are made, but another is the way of conversion, and there seems to be more authority for the story that Namdev was converted from an evil life to service of Vithoba. Several *abhangas*—among others one said to be by his wife—refer to an early career of lawlessness brought to a sudden end by his contribution at the tears shed by a woman whom he had made a widow. In his remorse he would have taken his own life in the temple of Nagnath, but he found comfort and forgiveness when he sought instead the presence of the more gracious Vithoba, and from that day onward he gave himself with complete devotion to the worship of this god.

"The chief religious interest in Namdev's life lies in tracing a change or development in his thought which his *ambhangas* reveal. At first he is the purely emotional Bhakta, all tears and cries and raptures. Later in his life, however, he seems to have passed through an experience which greatly altered his outlook on the world. In the first stage of his experience Vithoba of Pandhari is the sole object of his devotion; he can scarcely tear himself away from the precincts of his temple. At a later period Vithoba has become for him no more than a symbol of the supreme power that pervades the universe. He is still a bhakta, but he is no longer visited by the guests of passion that had once shaken his soul. An attitude



of spiritual indifference is now his supreme attainment. His faith rests upon a philosophical interpretation of the universe, which blunts the sensations which formerly harassed him and brings him, if not peace, at least passivity. This change, or growth, is reflected in his *abhangas* which have not, of course, come down to us in their historical setting or in the order of their composition."

## CHAPTER II

### PHILOSOPHY

To understand Namdev's philosophical approach, it is necessary to know his times, his traditions and the very roots of the *Bhakti* movement. In the Atharva-Veda the Vratyas are described as those who do not believe in the Yajna rituals, but depended on individual penance. As they believed in Vratas (vows) they were called Vratyas.

In Kathopanishad the Absolute or Brahma was described with many negative attributes like unapproachable, non-formal unborn, unending, eternal, sublime, beyond words and so on. The Nath Panth called it Niranjan. The Shvetashetar-Upanishad uses the word Nirguna for the first time :

Karmadhyakshah Sarvabhutodhivasi Sakshi Cheta Kevalo  
Nirgunashcha

(He presides over all actions, He resides in all beings,  
He is the witness, He is the consciousness, He is the Absolute  
and is quality-less)

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad equates the soul with God, the Atman with Parmatman. Geeta further elucidates this Absolute as indestructible, omnipresent, un-distributed and beyond all sensual apperception.

Buddhism regarded all difference between men and men as artificial and untenable. Defying all scriptural authority and caste or Varna, differences attached to birth, Buddha regarded Nirvana as the only permanent value. All else was transitory and ephemeral. The Nirguna saints, Yogis and Tantriks too propagated this equality amongst all men. Only the importance of Guru is accepted by the followers of the path of Yoga.

Early Hinduism was polytheistic and believed in the theory of incarnation. Later it evolved into some kind of formless god-heads, worship and meditation, through Vedanta. It was conformed



with monotheistic Islam and later with Sufism. The Nirguna saints followed a middle course and tried to create a synthesis between Vedanta and Sufism. They formulated a new kind of Sadhana or penance which was a combination of the three-fold ways of knowledge, devotion and action.

The Vedic system of worship consisted of hymns, panegyrics, stotras, animal sacrifice. It slowly culminated into an elaborate ritualism of sacrifice. But later even this system was transformed into pure devotion and purity of action. The inner heretic and rebellious practices led into reformation. Jain, Buddhist and materialistic Charvaka sects were such deviations and revisionist courses. Some of them questioned the very sanctity and sensibility of the old orthodox practices.

The various sects prevalent before Namdev could be summarized as follows :

1. Smarta Sampradaya of Shankaracharya
2. Sahajayana of Siddha Sarabapa
3. Jain Munis after Mahavir
4. Natha-Sampradaya of Gorakhnath
5. Various sects of Bhakti :
  - (a) Alvars of the South and Saivite saints
  - (b) Vaishnava Acharyas and Saints
  - (c) Kashmir Saivism
  - (d) Varkari Panth
  - (e) Mahanubhava Panth
  - (f) Sahajiyas of Bengal
  - (g) Lingayats of Karnatak
  - (h) Sufis and Muslim saints

Let us briefly take a resume of the achievements and limitations of these sects. Shankaracharya (788-820 A. D.) was born in Malabar at Kaladi. His father was Shivaguru and mother was Subhadra. He was a Namboodri Brahmin. He had a remarkable command over Sanskrit, 279 books are attributed to be composed by him. He was a keen debater and a sharp logician. He travelled widely throughout India.

‘Brahma Satyam Jaganmithya Brahmojiven no param’ (Brahma is the only truth, the World is illusion. Brahma and the soul are not different, the one includes the other) is the substance of his teaching. His greatest weakness is the problem of Maya. He

is not able to explain the purpose of the origin of this. Creation; he takes recourse in the Brahma-Sutras to various analogies. Shankaracharya's philosophy became too abstruse and dry for the commoner and he himself had to write more musical hymns like Saundarya-Lahari. He was also criticized as a crypto-Buddhist, as his Brahman was very much similar to the Buddhist ultimate principle of Void or Shunya.

Shankaracharya's Smarta sect worshipped the five gods with equal devotion : Shiva, Vishnu, Shakti, Ganesh and Surya. He also believed in the Vedas and other scriptures which were called Shrutis or "Those which were heard". Though God in several forms was worshipped, yet there was an undercurrent of one all-pervading godliness which was non-dualistic. Namdev was influenced by this philosophy of unqualified monism. Actually Namdev carried the message of Vedanta to the common masses and so Dr. R. D. Ranade called the age of these saints as the Age of Democratic Mysticism.

Post-Buddhist sects in India are so many that it is almost a confusing picture. Yet Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayana has given a very fine and detailed picture of the religious conditions in India in the introduction to his *Dohakosh* published by Bihar Rashtrabhasa Parishad. Buddhism branched off into two main currents—The Hinayana and the Mahayana. Later Mantrayana and Vajrayana were also added to it. It was a curious mixture of the Buddhist phenomenalism and asceticism with Tantric secretive anti-social practices. Mahayana is strongly influenced by Hindu Bhakti cults as revealed in Shanti Bhikshuk's work in Hindi published from Vishvabharati, Shantiniketan. Mahayana tried to codify Buddha's message.

Vajrayana is associated with the eighty-four Siddhas. They turned Buddha's Shunya and Karuna into Prajna and Upaya; they also borrowed the Chinese and Tibetan principles of Yub and Yang (man and woman principle) and imagined the state of their meeting as Yuganaddha. Budhichitta was turned into Vajrasatya. Out of this a queer mixture of hedonism and stoicism ensued. It was called the doctrine or the Greatest pleasure—Mahasukha-Vad. The five *makars* became essential and to go beyond their sensuousness through abandon and liberated behaviour, was one of their targets. Dr. Rameshchandra Mazumdar



has quoted in his History of Bengal in Part I, the Charyapadas which denote how this Vajrayana turned into Sahajayana. One of the essentials was de-casting oneself and free mixing with women of lower castes like Dombi, Natini, Rajakini (washerwomen) or Chandal was permitted. In Sarahpad's poems such a Dombini figures, which becomes later the symbol of Maya in Kabir and Tukaram's writings.

Sarahpad's criticism of the upper castes, particularly of the hypocrisy and the gap between their precept and practice is repeated in several *padas* of saints like Namdev or Tukaram. Sarahpad says, "Brahmins do not know the real secret, they repeat Vedas like parrots mechanically. They take the clay, water and grass and chant *mantras* without knowing their meanings. This kind of fire-worship and fire-sacrifice is a sure way of spoiling one's eyesight with smoke. They wear ochre robes but in practice they are not ascetics at all. The Shaivites besmear their bodies with ashes, but they have not really conquered their senses. Many wear long unkempt hair and burn lamps in the day or carry bells with them; some mendicants grow their nails or wear dirty rags, some wander naked and take off their hair by plucking them out and do all kinds of peculiar and unnatural practices. All of them thought that they would reach the ultimate state of Shunya in an easy or spontaneous ('Sahaj') way. All severe body-bending and physical masochism was not necessary. By the meeting of Kamal (Lotus) and Kulish (The thunderbolt or the diamond in some cases), the two symbols of the female and male principles, one can reach the Vision and enjoy the blessed beatitude in a natural way. The term 'Su-rati' (which meant *smriti* or memory as well as sexual union) attained a special meaning and it was pitted against the caste-exclusive *Shruti* (Vedas or testimony). Siddhas named Telopa, Shantipa, Kanhapa, Shabarapa, Dombpa and others followed Sarahpa; the suffix 'Pa' was the short form of 'Pad' or feet. From the eighth to the twelfth century the later Buddhists like Vajrayanis attempted some kind of synthesis in Shaivism, Buddhism and also the then current Bhakti cults. The Nath panthi Jogis and Gorakhnath's Hath-yogis were influenced by these practices. In Namdev the great importance attached to the Guru is due to such influences. Dr. Hazariprasad Dwivedi's Nath-sampradaya in Hindi proves this point; so does R. H. Dhere's Marathi work on the

same subject.

Later Jainism also insisted on purity of action and means. Devasen (circa 932) who composed *Bhama sangraha* and *Darshan-Sar* preached equality of castes. Ram Singh of the eleventh century attacked the malpractices of the so called higher castes in his *Pahud Doha*. In this work, in the *doha* 206, he says :

Mantrun, Tantun, Shaiyanu, dharanu

Nami uchhasah kijjai karance

Emai Paramssukkhu muni subbai,

Eti galgal kamun ruchchai

(Chanting of Mantras, Tantra, all the teachings of meditation (dhyana, oharana and breath-control—why for, to what purpose ? Muni (Ramsingh) thinks that all these practices are simply ridiculous to him. To attain ultimate bliss all this botheration is unnecessary).

Muni Ramsingh and Joindu (Yogindra) have attacked and exposed idolatry and proved the futility of image-worship. Instead they insisted on introversion. These sects were atheistic and they laid more stress on subjective purity. In Namdev and other democratic saints of his time like Gora, Savata and others one finds many echoes of the sayings of these Munis and Bhikkhus. They all criticized the rot that had set in orthodox hide-bound Brahmanical Hinduism.

Nath Panth propagated by Guru Gorakhnath was another such revolt. The late Dr. Rangeya Raghav (T. Narasimhachar) in his Ph. D. thesis in Hindi on *Gorakhnath* has written in details about the life and philosophy of this almost legendary figure. When did this sect start is not exactly known, the roots of all such sects are hidden in historical antiquity. But it is believed that Adinath was the first Nath Guru. Adinath is also the name of a Jain monk. It was also called as *Avadhut* sect and *Siddh Kaul Mat*. The followers were also popularly known as *Kanphate* or *Jogis* with the split ear-lobes. The word Nath has been analysed as one who is establishing (—Tha) the Brahman in the form of Nada (Na). They all believed in reaching the Highest stage where some kind of music or divine sound was heard.

The practices of the Shakti-worshippers current at that time were mixed in these tenets of Nath sects. Thus Adinath is considered to be Shiva, and this sect has a close resemblance to



Kashmir Trik philosophy. Matsyendranath and Jalandharnath were the two disciples of Gorakhnath. There are twelve different sect which branched from Gorakhnath, Kabir, Jaisi, Surdas and later saints. All devotional poets have described these Jogis vividly. They were wandering minstrels and mendicants, who carried begging-bowls and horns and accosted each other by the term 'Allakh' (A-laksha=un-attainable, invisible). They carried with them a musical instrument called '*Kingri*'. Matsyendranath, Machhindra, Minanath, Minapad are the names of some important yogis of the Nath panth. He was in the line of Gurus of Dnyandev or Dnyaneshwar. Namdev imbibed the principles of Nath panth through his great respect for and the company of Dnyaneshwar. While Matsyendra was connected with Shaivite Kapaliks, Jalandharnath (on whose name the place Jullunder was founded) was connected with Buddhist Kapaliks. Namdev in his travels to Punjab was definitely acquainted with these kinds of mendicants also.

In the history of religious sects and schools in medieval Hinduism, the most interesting sociological phenomenon is that the very exclusiveness, corrupt practices and hypocrisy they sought to attack in orthodox and bigoted sects slowly and gradually corroded these liberal and rebellious new schools. Thus in India the attempt at any change or break-through very quickly defeats its own purpose. The Rebels turn into worse kinds of Establishment and this process of fossilization of any fresh attempt at free-thinking is repeated time and again. Any attack on the conservative framework is easily recognized as another sectarian off-shoot and the roots of the *banyan* tree become more and more strengthened. Buddha was thus made into one of the *avataras* or incarnations of Vishnu and admitted in the Hindu Pantheon. So were the tenets of Nath sect absorbed in the mainstream of Bhakti.

Nath panth did not believe in Vedas as the sole authority, but preached some kind of inner intuition as the ultimate testimony. They did not believe in the elaborate sacrificial rites, but took 'Om' as the ultimate principle. Book-knowledge was abhorred and personal realization or subjective experience was insisted upon this brought in the inevitability of direct communion through Guru. Instead of the scriptures the word got an upper hand. In the matter of ultimate salvation or emancipation, the

Nath sect has much similarity with the ultimate Nairatma of the Buddhist Mahayanis. They did not think that the process of identity with the Ultimate or Absolute ends with the knowledge of non-duality, but they tried to go beyond where the real Bliss lies. The concept of Hindu heaven is here substituted by the Mahasukhavati of Buddhists

The Naths elaborated a kind of Yoga practice in which the Serpent-Power or *Kundalini* was to be awakened. For this they gave an interesting description of the six different seats of Power or lotuses in the body. By breath-control one conquered these seats and reached the highest where the undisturbed or limitless (Anahat or Anhad) Nad or the 'Supreme Sound' is heard. As the penitant *sadhak* advances in his yogic practices he goes beyond this Nad or sound and reaches the state of beatitude or *samadhi*. Such a person becomes a *siddha*. In Gorakhnath's *Hathayoga Pradipika* and in Dnyaneshwer's *Anubhavamruta* there are references to this yogic system. But Namdev was unlettered in the sense that he was not exposed to any systematic Sanskrit learning. He absorbed all these terms through hearsay and listening to many practising wandering yogis. Namdev's specific contribution was to bring about a synthesis in the way of knowledge and the way of Devotion. He thus democratized the devotional approach which was previously considered limited to upper castes and so exclusive. According to Dr. B. N. Mundi, "Gorakhnath's original banyan tree branched into various forms in various provinces and states : in Nepal, Assam, Bengal, and Panjab. In Maharashtra the branches took roots and one finds Varkari Mahanu-bhava, Datt, Anand, Chaitanya and Samarth as the different names of these offshoots." (page 71)

Was there any feed-back from the South during this period in the movement of devotional saints in Maharashtra ? Shaivite and Vaishnava sects flourished in Tamilnad in the first millenium of the Christian era. From the second century onwards, the twelve Alvars preached their spiritual message. Rev. G. U. Pope has given a feel of the original sublimity and music in his verse translation of the *Divya Prabandham* texts. The South, in general did not have many doubting Thomases, Jainism and Buddhism, had not uprooted the beliefs of the orthodox Hindus in idol-



worshipping; though Shaivism had the seeds of the worship of the formless godhead and Shankaracharya distilled his Vedanta as metaphysics of Pure Reason. Yet the common people had not questioned the masters. The overwhelming influence and onslaught of Islam had not reached the South till the twelfth century.

Raghunathacharya or Nath Muni (850—920) is said to have collected five thousand Prabandham *Padas* of Alvars; out of which 1300 are composed by Nammalvar. But before the Alvars and later also simultaneously 63 Maha-Saivites propagated their tenets through very fine metaphysical and mystic poetry. The Shaiva saints were from various castes : some were farmers and even Shudras, all of them were not necessarily Brahmins. Nandan was an untouchable. The Shavites had ousted the Buddhist and Jain influences and even the traces which remained were very feeble. In Karnatak the Jain and the Virshaiva saints could easily establish themselves. While Basaveshvara, the founder of Virshaivism, preached a philosophy of defying the framework of caste, Dasas also absorbed the same process of democratization.

Vaishnav Acharyas who revived the worship of Rama and Krishna were as follows :

- |                   |             |
|-------------------|-------------|
| 1. Yamunacharya   | ( 960—1040) |
| 2. Ramanujacharya | (1026—1136) |
| 3. Madhvacharya   | (1197—1275) |
| 4. Nimbarkacharya | (1113—1151) |
| 5. Vallabhacharya | (1298—1429) |

It was Ramanujacharya who is relevant to the kind of Bhakti Namdev propagated. It was the way of Absolute Faith in the grace of God. Technically it involved *Prapatti* or complete surrender. Ramanuja gave the right of this total submission to the fourth and the lowest castes and sub-castes also. Now salvation was no more the monopoly of the upper few or the twice-born only.

Coming to Maharashtra, the Varkari sect was the most influential sect as far as Namdev was concerned. The term Varkari is a Marathi one which means one who goes on pilgrimage, or does a 'Vari'. Pandharinath or Vitthal is the main deity. For having His glimpse (darshan) the devotees go every Kartik and

Ashadh, in groups. This was an attempt to go back to the original forms of worship. This was rooted in the Narayaniya sect propounded by Narada and Shandilya in the *Bhakti-Sutras*. Scholars go to the extent of interpreting Heraclites as mentioned in Megasthenes as 'Hari-Krishna' of the Shoursenas. As these devotional schools laid all their faith in Vishnu, so they were called Vaishnavas and they called their ultimate object of worship 'Bhagavan' or 'Bhagvat' and so they were termed Bhagavatas. In 140 Heliodorus pillar raised by the Greek viceroy at Taxila, the 'Devadeva Vasudeva' has mentioned the Gupta kings in the eighth century as calling themselves Parama Bhagavat. On the Coromondal coast in the stone-edicts of the Pallavas Bhaghavat religion was popular in the third and fourth centuries of the Christian era. The valabhis of Gujarat in the sixth century were Bhagavatas. Banabhatta in his *Harsha-charita* mentions Pancharatra and Bhagavat as the two important sects.

The Bhagavat way of absolute devotion to one God was the direct influence of *Shrimad-Bhagavata*, the holy book of the Vaishnavas. The Varkari panth combined in it the catholicity of the Nath Panth, its reliance on the Guru and the desire to serve the common people, and giving an equal treatment to all persons irrespective of caste and creed, as also found in the Lingayats of Karnatak. It is very difficult to trace its exact origin in Maharashtra as little historical evidence is available.

The famous popular *pada* is '*Sant Krupa Jhali*': "By the grace of saints, the building was completed. Dnyandev laid the foundation for this temple. Nama, his servant enlarged it. Janardan Eknath gave it the pillars of Bhagavat. Tukaram became the pinnacle. Sing with patience all together. Bahini says the flags are fluttering." It is no use elaborating this song.

All the Varkaris have in common one object of worship : Vitthal, whose temple is in Pandharpur. Pundalik is the main devotee who built this temple. About the crown (which is like a Shiva-Lingam) on the head of the main image there is lot of discussion. So is about the word "Pandhari" itself, which is the Marathi word for white, derived from the Sanskrit 'pandur', and is attributed to be the colour of Shiva. Vishnu is proverbially blue. Some historians attribute the popularity of this deity to some Kind of Shaiva and Vaishnava unity. A deity like Hari-hara was



already worshiped in Karnatak and in Andhra. At Tirupati Lord Venkats had a similar crown.

The Varkari sect was influenced by Vasugupta's Shiva-sutras. Dnyaneshwar was influenced by Kashmir Shaivism. According to Dr. R. D. Ranade, the Varkaris fast on Monday as a token of reverence to Shiva. The Varkaris do not believe in caste differences. This was the sect which brought about the synthesis between the Nirgun and Sagun forms of devotions. Though Varkaris are considered Vaishnava they are very close to Panchratra. The worship of Vitthal as one Absolute God and the realization of the Supreme as a matter of individual experience brings them closer to Vedanta. The Varkaris insist on pilgrimage (to Pandharpur), singing of hymns in a congregational manner and an austere life. These practices seem to be very similar to many non-Hindu sects too.

Amongst the Varkaris, on the one hand there are Yogis like Nivrutti and Dnyaneshwar, and on the other Bhaktas like Namdev and Gora. The Varkaris further branched into several sub-sects like Chaitanya, Swarup, Anand and Parkash. The names themselves indicate the stress on one or the other aspects of mystic realization. The followers of this pathway to God are found in Vidarbha, Gujarat, Karnatak, Andhra and Bengal.

The other important devotional sect in Maharashtra, on which recent researches have thrown much light, was Mahanubhav. It is also called Jayakrishni Panth (in Punjab), Mahatma Panth and Achyut Panth. It was anti-Vedic and partly pro-Islam too. Sri Chakradhar originally from Gujarat was its propagator. But the first founder is supposed to be Gundoba. Gundam Raul or Govind Prabhu of Siddhupur in Vidarbha. Chakradhar was originally Harpaldeva, the son of Vishaldeva the Samvedi, Nagar Brahmin minister of Malladeva-rai of Broach in Gujarat. He fought many battles, enjoyed two or three marriages and later got disgusted of all pomp and regal splendour and went to Vidarbha. This Chakradhar founded this sect and had 500 disciples including woman. His date is given to be Saka 1073 to 1185. He worshipped Krishna and Dattatreya. Chakradhar gave even the Shudras the right to *Sanyasa* : which was a matter borrowed from Buddhism. Nagadevacharya (Saka 1158-1224) continued his work. Later Bhaskar Kavi, Keshavaraj Suri,

Damodar Bhatt, Gopal Vyas, Mahibhatt, Mahadai a and others organized and enlarged this sect.

The philosophy of the Mahanubhavas was rather simple. They believed in four elements : Jeev (Being), Devata (Gods as objects of worship), Prapanch (World as illusion) and Parmeshwar (the Absolute). The world is transitory, the Absolute is eternal. The soul of the beings is bound, the Absolute is free. They seem to be dualists. Gods are many, so are the beings which have miniature or symbolic bodies (Linga-deha). It is the Absolute who gives the knowledge and thus one is emancipated from the bondage of the illusory world. They also insist on non-violence, renouncing family life, good conduct. The respect for the guru is an additional matter. Without him the realization is not achieved. Every thing connected with the Guru is to be venerated. In this matter they seem to be next to Buddhists. The grace of the Guru was the most important catalytic and so personal communion was also emphasized. It was called *prasad-sovna*. They put on black robes; and did not believe in untouchability. They served Marathi language and literature in a remarkable manner. Out of their Great Seven Books, four are concerned with Krishna's life.

In Karnatak an important sage in the Lingayat Panth was Allam Prabhu who was a Nath Siddha. He is also considered as one of the disciples of Matsyendranath. Even in Basavesvara's *Vachanas* and in Akka Mahadevi's hymns, there are echoes of Guru Gorakhnath's *Hathayoga pradipika*. It is the opinion of one of the scholars. (see Sri Dhere : Guru Gorakhnath p. 201). Allam Prabhu later had difference of opinion with Gorakh, and in 1265 A. D. Revana Siddha who came with Navanathas became a disciple of Vir-Shaivism. Namdev's conversion from the worship of God with form, into the principle of a formless God, seems to be a result of these various philosophies current in India.

Amongst such philosophies Sufism was also a very strong influence. Sufism arose as a protest against orthodox Islam. But Setu Madhavrao Pagdi maintains in his Marathi work 'Sufi Sampradaya' that it is not correct. They insisted on *Marifat* or direct communion and the value of a preceptor. In 1061 A. D. Hazrat Dataganj, who came to Lahore from Ghazni in the form



of a captive, wrote *Kashful Mehjub*. He was initiated into Sufism in Baghdad. He brought this philosophy into India, furthered by Fakhruddin of Phenuphonda in South (died 1147 A. D.) and Syed Mohamad Bandanivaj Gesudaraj (1217-1320 A. D.) who wrote *Merajul Ashaqui*, an early book of Hindi language. The four sects of Indian Sufis were Chistiya, Subhandiya, Qadariya and Nakshabandi. All of them had one thing in common : Love for God and belief in His omnipresence and omniscience.

The Pratyabhijna of Kashmir Shaivism has much in common with Sufi's direct experience. Some Scholars maintain that Varkaris in Maharashtra were influenced by these philosophies, though their sources were very different. It is interesting to note that the Sahajiya Vaishnav in Bengal also maintained the same ecstasy of love as an essential for God-Realization. The Buddhist Sahajiyas talk of 'Prajna' and 'Upaya' and Bauls sing of 'Sahaj'. Jaideva's *Gita Govind* and Vidyapati's *padas* have described the amours of Krishna and Radha and Krishna and Gopis in the same spirit of God meeting the soul. All of them were different from the abstract Vedanta dialectics.

In the Guru Granth Sahib Jaidev, Sadhna, Veni and Trilochan are also mentioned as contemporaries of Namdev. Jaidev in the sacred book (*Gaudi 16*) is referred to as 'Jaidev Nama Vipra Sudama' 'Kali Jagt Nama Jaidev.' Whether this Jaidev is the same as the composer of *Gita Govinda*, born in Orissa (or Bengal?), son of Bhojdev and Radhadevi, is a matter of dispute amongst scholars. In the Granth-Sahib the two *padas* in Raga Gurjari and Maru seem to be influenced by Patanjala Yoga-Sadhana.

Sant Sadhna may be Sajjan Kasai according to Marathi biographers of saints, as some of the events in their lives are common. His one *pada* is in Rag Bilawal (No. 58, Guru Granth Sahib). In *Sant Gatha* there are six *padas* of this saint. There is the same sincere feeling of pouring out his heart before God in this poet. It seems that the poet was in great distress when he sang this hymn.

Sant Veni's three *padas* are given in Guru Granth Sahib in Siri Rag, Rag Ramkali and Rag Prabhati. Guru Arjandev had made Veni as his Guru is another reference in Rag Bassant-Maihar. These *padas* also refer to Yoga sect.

Sant Trilochan was an elder contemporary of Guru Nanak. His birth year was probably 1266 A. D. From the *padas* in Guru Granth Sahib it seems Namdev and Trilochan had a dialogue. Trilochan said :

*Nama Maya molitya —kahe Trilochan meet*

*Kahe chheepahun chhaile—Ram no labahun cheet*

(Nama is engrossed in Maya, says Trilochan his friend. Why spread over this printing (of fabrics), without keeping Ram in the heart.)

Namdev has replied to this in these words :

*Nama kahe Triochana—munhte Ram sambali*

*Hath haun kari kam sanu—chitta Niranjan nall*

(Nama says—O Trilochan the mouth utters Ram. The hands and feet do their work, keeping the heart in Niranjan, the Abstract Absolute).

Saint Ravidas has referred to Namdev, Kabir, Trilochan, Sadhna, Sena together as persons who have 'swum through this ocean' and gone beyond. Priyadas Mahipati and Purandar have given some stories about them. Trilochan Das was a trader by caste. His four *padas* in Guru Granth Sahib have some reference to Matharashtra. These *padas* criticize fake sadhus expose the meaninglessness of the illusory world and extol importance of God's name. He refers to 'Vithoba' also.

In the Kashmir poetess Lalla Dyed or Lalleshwari whose utterings are collected by Dr. Grierson and Barnet in "Lall Vakhani" and by prof. J. L. Kaul also in his articles and the booklet on 'Lol lyrics', there are echoes of the same intense love for the Abstract and the formless God as seen in later Namdev and Kabir. It is difficult to establish any link, but the influence of Sufism seems to be working all over North India, including Kashmir, in the medieval age.

Poetesses in all Indian languages have played a very important role in underlining this ecstasy of God-realization. Andal and Avvaiyar in Tamil, Akka Mahadevi in Kannada, Lall Dycd and Haba Khatun in Kashmiri. Mirabai and Sahajobai in Rajasthani and Brij Bhasha, Molla in Telugu and Muktabai and Janabai in Marathi are good examples. Janabai has composed some *Abhangas* about Namdev's life.

In the Psalms of Maratha Saints on page 17 there is an



account of Janabai as follows:—"One of the members of Namdev's household has also a place among the Maratha poet-saints. This is a Sudra woman, namad Janabai, who, according to the story, became a domestic slave of the poet because of her admiration of his devotion. She spent her whole life in his service and Vithoba's. The god is declared in the legend to have been constantly in her company, grinding corn for her, drawing water, helping her to wash the clothes. It is not always clear, however, whether the *abhangas* do not really describe, not a personal relationship of communion, but a recognition of the divine immanence in all things. When she says that—"in the inner shrine of contemplation Pandurang comes to meet us and clasps us to his breast," it is difficult to believe that she is not describing an experience of spiritual fellowship. But when she says, referring to the household occupations :

Grinding pounding this our game,  
Burn we up all sin and shame

There is here more than a suspicion of Advaita doctrine. She is reaching beyond the Maya, the "sport", of life and its duties, to an identity with Brahman beyond the distinction of good and evil. This is fully unveiled in another *abhang*, which after expressing a feeling that has all the appearance of being parallel to that daily comradeship with Christ which Christian saints have ever sought, betrays itself in its conclusion as no more than a metaphysical affirmation of identity with the All."

The utterance of the name of God, Smaranam (Sumarni), is the first step in nine-fold Bhakti. Namdev, as his name itself suggests, insisted on this aspect of Bhakti.

Dr. R. D. Ranade writes in his *Mysticism in Maharashtra* about Namdev's insistence on the name of God.

"Among all the Saints of Maharashtra, we find a perpetual insistence on the significance and efficacy of the Name of God; and of all these saints, we may say, Namdeva's insistence upon the Name is the strongest. "If I were to leave meditation on Thy feet even for a while," says Namdeva, "my lifebreath will vanish instantly. If there were a cessation to the utterance of the name of God in my mouth, my tongue will split a thousandfold. If my eyes were not to see Thy beautiful form, they would

come out forcibly from their sockets" (Abg 49). Through mystical experience, through devotion, through deceit, through the torments of Samsara, let the name of God always dance upon the tongue (Abg 51). There is neither time nor season for the meditation of God. There is neither a high caste nor low in His meditation. He who is the Ocean of love and pity shall come to the succour of all (Abg 54). The great Siva was tormented by the poison called Halahala, and yet his body became cool when he meditated on God. In the eighteen Puranas, says Namdeva, the only remedy narrated is the utterance of the Name of God (Abg 55). The Pandavas, even though they were enveloped in a house of fire, were saved because they meditated on the name of God. The cow-herds could not be burnt by fire, because they held God in their hearts. Hanuman could not be burnt by fire, because he meditated on the name of Rama. Fire had no power over Prahlada, because he constantly uttered the name of God. Sita was not burnt by fire, because she set her heart upon Raghu-natha. The home of Bibhishana was saved in the holocaust at Lanka, says Namdeva, because he meditated on the name of God (Abg 59). The covering of untruth, which envelops a man's words, shall never depart except through a meditation on God (Abg 61). The Name of God is the Form of God, and the Form of God is the Name of God. There is no other remedy except the Name of God, says Namdeva, and anybody who says there is another is a fool (Abg 64). God may remain concealed; but He cannot conceal His name. When we have once uttered His name He cannot escape from us (Abg 66). Let the body live or depart, fix your mind upon God. I shall never leave Thy feet, says Namdeva, shall keep Thy Name in my mouth, and set my heart aflame with Thy love. I only implore Thee, says Namdeva, that Thou shouldst fulfil my resolve (Abg 67). To be in Samsara is even a pleasure, when the mind is once set upon God (Abg 68). Poor Brahmins do not know the secrets of realisation. God can be attained by meditation on His name only. I implore the young and the old, says Namdeva, to cling fast to the Name of



God. In all your religious ceremonies, you should think only of God, and nothing else (Abg 72). They paint the pictures of the Sun or the Moon, but they cannot paint the picture of light. They can put on apparel of a Sanyasin, but they cannot imitate his dispassion. They may perform a Kirtana, says Namdeva, but they will miss the nature of God-love (Abg 75). With a Vina in my hand and with the name of God in my mouth, I shall stand up in the temple of God. I shall renounce all food and water, and shall think of nothing but God. I shall forget my mother, or father, or wife, or children. I shall lose all bodily consciousness, and merge it in the Name of God, says Namdeva (Abg 77). If, in such a condition, Death comes to devour me I shall sing and dance in joy. My only wish is, says Namdeva, that I should serve Thee from life to life (Abg 80)."

Nicol Macnicol has translated fourteen Abhangas of Namdev, out of which we quote two to give an idea of the philosophical depth of his poetry :

391 (*Tatva pusavaya gelo vedajnasi*)

From Vedic students first the truth I sought,  
And found them full of "Thou Shalt, Thou shalt not"  
Never shall they possess tranquillity,  
For mighty in them is the power of "me".  
From Scripture scholars sought I once again  
The form divine, but found them rent in twain  
Not once agrees with what the others say,  
But pride and error lead them all astray.  
Next in Purana I sought that form so fair  
But still, alas, no place of rest was there.  
The preachers preach of Brahma but set their mind  
On lust, and so true peace they never find.  
Ask of the Haridas the way devout ;  
You will find in him no faith at all but doubt  
He tells in words the Name's high excellence,  
While all the time engrossed with things of sense.  
Weary with seeking, here are last am I,  
Low at their feet, O Pandurang I lie

My worldly life is full of tears, but thou  
('Tis Nama cries), O save me now.

(2) *The Reign of Peace*

583 (*Avagha samsara sukhach karin*)

Now all my days, with joy I'll fill  
Full to the brim  
With all my heart to Vitthal cling  
And only him,  
He will sweep utterly away  
All dole and care;  
And all in sunder shall I rend  
Illusion's snare.

O altogether dear is he  
And he alone,  
For all my burden he will take  
To be his own  
Lo, all the sorrow of the world  
Will straightway cease,  
And all unending now shall be  
The reign of peace  
For all the bondage he will break  
Of worldly care  
And all in sunder will he rend  
Illusion's snare  
From all my foolish fancies now  
Let me be free  
In Vitthal, Vitthal only is  
Tranquillity.

Dyaneshwar called the poetic power of Namdev as 'sweeter than nectar' and 'deeper than ocean.' Molseworth called him the first poet of Marathi literature. Prof. Patwardhan described Namdev as 'the first and foremost of the new school of lyric poetry in Marathi.' Dr. Tulpule finds in him 'afflorescence of imagery, use of many ancient words.' Prof. N.R. Phatak calls him a real rebel.' Dr. Vinaymohan Sharma has described him the 'first propagator of Nirguna Bhakti and the guide and preceptor of saints like Kabir.'



Namdev's poetic and philosophic legacy can be summarized in the words of Dr. Govind Trigunayat and others as the synthesis of action and non-action, egalitarianism, non-attributiveness of the Absolute, unending deep feeling of love, belief in omnipresence of God, non-dualism as opposed to polytheism, insistence on devotion and chanting of name, master-and-slave relationship between God and the devotee, mystic intuition, social reform, the non-ritualistic manner of worship and the usage of people's language.

Acharya Ramchandra Shukla discusses the change in Namdev's philosophical attitude and the shift in the manner of worship from Saguna to Nirguna. In his famous 'History of Hindi literature', Shukla says in these words : "Namdeva had not applied himself to Saguna Bhakti on account of any imitation from a Guru. He had done so on his own, by a spontaneous and innate urge. Dnyandev was always explaining him that no knowledge is possible without a Guru. Saints talk about Nirguna Brahma and show the way to God—realization through the teachings of a Guru. Dnyandev went on insisting on the knowledge or pure Nirguna form. Without a Guru everything was futile. So he went to Visoba Khechar of Naglath. He has said :

My mind is the needle, my body is the thread  
Nama the tailor at the feet of Khechar bowed his head

and also :

My life was made fruitful by my Guru  
All my misery was over, he gave happiness  
Knowledge and charity my Guru taught me  
Life is void without Rama's name.

He has also said :

Whom shall I worship ?  
I do not see anyone different (than Him)  
If one keeps his faith in one stone  
On another stone one treads  
If that stone is God, we are also God  
Namdev says let me worship only Hari.

Ramchandra Shukla quotes his 'Nirgunibani' and gives two instances :

- Had there been no mother, no father, no action, no body  
Neither we would be there, nor you, no one would know  
who came from where  
There would have been no moon, no sun, no water  
would be mixed with air  
No scriptures, no Vedas, where would have Karma  
come from ?
- Pande, your Gayatri (cow) was eating the field of a Muslim  
With a lame foot, she came limping  
Pande, your Mahadev came riding a white bullock  
Pande, we also saw your Ramchand coming  
He fought with Ravan in vain, lost his own wife  
Hindu is blind, the Turk is one-eyed  
the Knower is wiser than both.

Such admonition of both Hindus and Muslims and their orthodoxies is also seen in Kabir.

The worshipper of idols insisted on a direct devotion to a personal God and indicated that an Abstract Absolute is also symbolically possible. But the worshipper of the formless only insisted on Knowledge.

In Namdev, his poems about Saguna worship are in Brijbhasha or in traditional language, but the later poems coloured with Nirguna feeling are in Sadhukkari or Nathpanthi's Khari Boli.

In Viyogi Hari's *Sant-Sudha Sar* the following poems from the Hindi Bani is quoted '*Mera kiya kachhu na hoi*' which gives a gist of Namdev's philosophical approach. Freely translated it means "Nothing happens by my doing. Whatever Rama does, happens. The Badshah was full of pride. He sentenced Nama to be trampled under a mad elephant's feet. Nama's mother started weeping : "Why don't you leave Rama and worship Khuda ?" Nama said, "I am not your son, you are not my mother. Let my body fall but I would sing Hari's greatness to the last breath ?" The elephant bowed before him and only touched him with his trunk. Nama was saved as God (Hari) was behind him. Kazi and Mulla saluted him : this Hindu has our respects. Iron chains in his feet, cymbals in hand, Nama sang the greatness of Gopal. Till Gunga and Jamuna do not flow in the opposite direction,



Name would go on singing of Hari."

Dr. R. D. Ranade has described the tendency of this Age of Devotion in these words :

"There are certain characteristics which mark off the saints of this period from the saints who belong either to the earlier or the later period in the development of Maharashtra Mysticism. In the first place, these mystics are cosmopolitans. They recognized the spiritual democracy all round. Prof. W.B. Patwardhan has well described the democracy of Bhakti school, as represented in Namdeva and his contemporaries. The gates of the Bhakti school were ever open. Whoever entered was hailed as a brother, nay, more, was honoured as a saint. He was addressed as a "Santa." All were "Santas" that gathered round and under the Garudapataka, the flag with the eagle blazoned on it, with 'Tala' or cymbals in hand, and the name of Vitthal on the tongue. The very atmosphere was sacred and holy. The breath of Heaven played freely, and all were equal there. Love, true genuine pure love, admits not of high and low, rich and poor, all is one and equal. All separatist tendencies vanished, the haughty isolation of Pride of Heredity, of Tradition melted away, all were but men, human, weak, frail, feeble, lame, and blind, calling on the same strength seeking the same love, hoping the same hope, dreaming the same dream, and seeing the same vision. Before Vithoba or Dattatreya, or Naganatha—call him by any name—all were equal. Age and sex, castes and class, breathed not in this equalising air. In the joy of Love, in the bliss of the service of the Lord, in the dance round the Flag of devotion—all were inspired with the same fire ; they ate of the same dish, drank of the same well, bathed in the same Chandrabhaga, Krishna, Goda or Banaganga, lay on the same sands, and waked to the same dawn. For five successive centuries Maharashtra was the abode of that noblest and truest of all Democracies, the Democracy of the Bhakti school. In the second place, all these saints are characterised by a contribution of the heart, by the helplessness of human

endeavour to reach unaided the majesty of God, by a sense of sinfulness inherent to human nature, by the necessity of finding out a Guru who may relieve them from the sufferings of the world, and finally, by the phenomena of conversion almost in every individual case. Each saint indeed has an individuality of his own even in his spiritual development. In the third place, it seems as if the mystics of this period show an all-absorbing love of God, which would not allow a rightful performance of one's duties before God-absorption. It is true that these saints show that God could be realised in any walk of life; but they also show that God is a very jealous God, who would not allow any love to be given to any other object beside Himself. The tailor, the barber, the maid-servant, the gardener, the sweeper, the potter, the goldsmith, even the nautch-girl could all realise God in the different stations of life. But as to whether they could continue in a rightful performance of their duties in the state of God-realisation is a different question. It seems that these saints gave themselves up to God-love and forgot everything else before it. The conflict between a rightful performance of duty and all-absorbing love of God has existed at all times and in all countries. But it seems that the saints of this period inclined the beam in the latter rather than in the former direction, and exhibited the all-absorbing character of God-realisation. God indeed is an all-devourer, and it seems from the examples of these saints that He devours also the performance of one's own natural duties."

Dr. Suniti Kumar Chhatterji has given a short estimate of Namdev in his *Languages and Literatures of Modern India* at p. 218 :

"A younger contemporary of Jnandeva was Namdeva (died 1350), a man of the tailor caste. Jnandeva's younger brother Sopandeva had a disciple Visoba Khechar, a grocer by profession and Namdeva received his religious initiation from Visoba. Pandharpur had by this time become a great centre of the earlier *Bhakti*, were popularized by a number of non-Brahman teachers using the language of the people,



among whom Namdeva was the most prominent. During his long life Namdeva visited Pandharpur frequently and wandered over the country singing his own compositions, once visiting Northern India itself. The devotional songs of Namdeva have all along remained popular, and two of them have found a place in the Sikh *Adi-grantha*. In Northern India he is also regarded as a saint of pan-Indian significance."

Dr. Chatterji was not correctly informed. The *Adi Granth* has many more songs of Namdeva than only two.

Dr. Mohan Singh writes about Namdev in *Indian literature* (Edited by Dr. Nagendra) on page 552 in these terms, while writing about Guru Nanak Deo (1469-1538):

"Let it be accepted finally (1) that there is no mention in any poem of Nanak, of Jaidev, Namdev, Kabir or Ravidas; (2) that their names first appear in the verses of the third Sikh Guru, Amardas (b. 1479 a. d.); (3) that Namdev whose miracles etc. are given in the poetry of Guru Amardas and Bhai Gurdas was the Maratha Chhipa Namdev and not another Panjabi Namdev."

Namdev performed a double function in the field of popularizing philosophy through poetry. He built a bridge between the Path of knowledge and Path of Devotion, between the language of the mystic Yogis and the rustic masses, between Maharashtra and Panjab. As he himself transformed from the idol-worshipping to the Name-remembering spiritual self, he also recorded his vision very vividly. He began to be frustrated by the fake preachers and masochist mendicants wandering all over India. He found in the lowly the most sublime and he could experience the vanity and vacuity of the rich merchants and the feudal lords and their pride in pomp and pelf. Namdev was a simple-hearted commoner who could prove in his life that single-minded devotion and sincere self-sacrifice can work wonders. He did not gather any army of disciples around himself but a society of spiritual seekers, slowly yet surely, surrounded him. Namdev, without his knowledge became the leader of a movement which was called the Varkari panth.

Parashuram Chaturvedi has said in his *Uttari Bharat ki Sant Parampara* (The tradition of Saints in North India) on page

122 that "Saint Namdev seemed to believe in both transcendence and immanence, in pantheism and non-dualism. His devotion was purely of the non-attributional Absolute." Namdev's influence on later Hindi poets is very significant. Dnyandev could not take the Vakari Panth beyond the precincts of Maharashtra. But Namdev took it to North India and prepared ground for Kabir, Ravidas and others.

The seed which the Siddhas and Nathas had sown in the eighth and ninth centuries sprouted up and developed into a large fruitful tree in the poets of the Nirgun Panth. Sarabpad had written in 760 A. D. :

Kintaha titta tapovan jai  
Mokha ki labbhai pani nhai

(What shall one get by going to places of pilgrimages and forests for meditation ? Does one get salvation by bathing ?)

The Buddhist rationalist Dharmakirti had asked the same question and declared that the five sure signs of a dull-headed person or a fool are to believe explicitly only in Vedas, to think that there is always a super-mundane cause for every worldly happening, to believe that by torturing the body one can control the mind, the naive presumption that by bathing one purifies the soul, to be surrounded by the feeling of distinction of castes. The original text is :

*Vedapramanyam, Kasyachit Kartrivadah,  
Snane-Dharmechha, santapaharanam,  
Jatibhedavalepah, iti Panchalingani Jadyah*

Namdev also says in his Bani :

*Kotij tiratha karai, anuj ahibalai garoi  
Ram Nam sari tau no pujai*

(One may go to million places of pilgrimage, may offer hair and many things, yet one does not worship the simple Ram Nam)

That Kabir was influenced by Namdev's philosophy is clear from many similar passages in both Kabir calls his God Mother as Namdev also does. At some places Kabir, Namdev and Charandas describe God as Husband and the Supreme Master :



*Ram mera piyu, main Ram ki bahuria* (Kabir)

(Ram is my loved one, I am Ram's wife)

*Main bauri, mera Ram bhatar* (Namdev)

(I am the wife, Ram is my husband)

*Dhiva chahe ke mat chache, woh to pi ki das*

(Charandas)

(Whether the Master likes or dislikes, the wife is the slave of the lover)

The importance of Guru is emphasized by both Namdev and Kabir and later saints like Tulasidas. The terminology of Yoga, the reference to Ida, Pingala and Sushumna Nadis is also common in Kabir and Namdev. Namdev says :

*Ida Pingala aur Sukhmana*

*Paune bandhi rahaugau*

*Chand Suruji chi samkari rakhau*

*Aham Joti mili jaugau*

(I will control the breath by controlling Ida, Pingala and Sushumna. I would make the moon and the sun the equal breathings of the two nostrils. I would make the ego join the Flame).

Both Kabir and Namdev hear the *Anahad* sounds, and experience in symbolic terms of hearing the terrestrial music, the showers of the rains from the high skies (*Gagan-mandal ki Varsha*—Kabir) and getting fully drenched. Namdev says :

*Gagan garaji maah joiye*

*Tapan disai tar anant re*

*Bijuri chamaki ghan barashibai*

*Tahan bhee jat hain sab sant se*

(The sky roared, see in the middle

You see the eternal unending string

Lightning flashes clouds pour down

There all the saints are bathing)

In their criticism of both Hindu and Muslim orthodoxy and the meaninglessness of stone-worship, both Kabir and Namdev are equally harsh.

Dr. R. D. Ranade quotes several *Abhangas* of Namdev which describe his spiritual experience :

Namdeva supposed that the faculty of God-realisation

is a God-given gift. "A cow gives birth to a calf in a forest ; who sends the calf, asks Namdeva, to the udders of the cow ? Who teaches the young one of a serpent the art of biting ? A *Mogara* flower stands of itself at the top of the creeper ; who teaches it to be fragrant ? Even if we manure a bitter ground-creeper with sugar and milk, it still makes the fruits of the gourd more bitter. A sugar-cane shall never leave its sweetness, if it is cut to pieces, or even if it is swallowed. Similarly, says Namdeva, the faculty of realising God is a native faculty, and by that alone will one be able to realise God" (Abg 135). When we have once seen God, it matters little to what place we go. As soon as we remember God, God shall be near us (Abg 137). We shall forget our hunger and thirst in the pleasure of God's Name. God, who is the source of immortality, is in the heart of Namdeva, and Namdeva therefore enjoys continued beautification (Abg 139). There is only one favour that we should ask of God ; that we should always think of Him in our heart ; that we should always utter His name by our mouth ; that we should always see Him in our eyes ; that our hands should worship only Him ; that our head be placed always at His feet ; that our ears should only hear of Gods exploit's ; that He should show Himself always to our right and to our left, before and after, and at the end of our life. We should ask God of no other favour except this Abg 140). As Namdeva began to see God, he found Him in all corners and in all directions (Abg 141). God's form can be seen even by a blind man, and a dumb man can communicate even in a deaf man's ears the knowledge of God. An ant shall devour the whole universe by its mouth says Namdev. Only we shall have to verify all these things in our own experience (Abg 142). When the Unstruck Sound springs out of the thousands-petalled lotus and when God's name is uttered, sins shall depart and hide themselves in a cavern. Keep yourself awake in the meditation on God. Your sins will depart at the utterance of God's name, and God will give you a secure lodgment in His abode (Abg 143). In another place, also, Namdeva speaks of sins being



destroyed by God's name. A single utterance of the name of God creates panic among sins. As soon as God's Name is uttered, the divine recorder ceases to record. God Himself comes forth to receive His devotee with materials of worship. If this were to turn out false, says Namdeva, then may his head be cut off from his body (Abg 144). Indeed, Namdeva tells us how God is filled with happiness at the singing of His praise. As we sit down and sing the praise of God, God stands before us. As in devotion we stand up and call on the name of God, God dances before us. God indeed loves his Kirtana so much that He forthwith comes to the succour of His devotees in the midst of difficulties (Abg 145). We have experienced joy says Namdeva, a thousand fold of what we have witnessed in the Divali holidays. There has been a waving of lights in our house and we have seen God Vitthala with our eyes. His presence has filled us with joy. Utter now the name of God. As the Lord of Namdeva came, the very gods were filled with delight (Abg 146). Namdeva in one place describes his experience when he saw God. Light as brilliant as that of a thousand suns shone forth at once from the heavens. The saints told Namdeva that God was coming. God indeed did come to Namdeva as a cow goes to its calf. All the ten quarters were filled by the inroads of the Eagle. A garland of flowers was released from the neck of God, and came to the earth. God's disc moved with Him in order to protect His devotee. God lifted up Namdeva with both of His hands and clasped him to His bosom (Abg 147). He alone; says Namdeva can be awake who has determined faith in the words of his teacher. What lamp can be lighted in order to see ourself? He, who gives light to the sun and the moon, cannot Himself be seen by any other light. There is neither east nor west in Him; neither north nor south. As an ocean at the time of the Great End might fill the universe, similarly, God fills the universe for one who has experienced Him (Abg 148). And as such one goes to the sleep of ecstasy, the twelve and sixteen damsels wave the fans before him. The devotee keeps awake in self-illumination. Trumpets sound forth. Untold varieties of unstruck sound emerge. There

is then neither sleep nor dream. The very Sun and the Moon set before that Illumination (Abg 149). It is only God who can know the love of His devotee in this manner. He always does reside with His devotee. Namdeva tells us that he was so filled with God-experience, that he thought that he was God, and that God was himself (Abg 150).



### CHAPTER III

## POETRY

The following two poems of Namdev from Nicol Macnicol's *Psalms of Maratha Saints*, well express the anguish of the metaphysical poet : A Bitter Cry, and The Heart's Desire.

### A BITTER CRY

No. 351 (*Majhi kona gati sanga*)

When will the end of these things be ?  
Ah tell me, Lord of Pandhari.  
When wilt thou save unhappy me ?  
O tell me, tell me true, for I  
Cry to thee with a bitter cry.  
Why speakest thou not ? Ah, Vitthal, why  
Thus silent ? whither shall I fly ?  
Who else will bear my sore distress ?  
Smite me not in my helplessness.  
As to the child is wholly sweet  
His mother, so to me thy feet.  
Thou gracious Lord of Rakhumai  
Friend of the poor, hear Nama's cry.

### THE HEART'S DESIRE

(*kiti, deva, tuhma yeu kakulati*)

O God, my cry comes up to thee—  
How sad a cry is it !  
What is this tragic destiny  
That fate for me has write ?  
Wherefore, O Hrisikesh dost thou  
So lightly pass me by ?

To whom to whom but to thee now  
 Can I lift my cry ?  
 As chiming anklets sweetly ring  
 So rings thy name abroad,  
 To human spirits hungering  
 Thou givest peace with God  
 Thou on thy shoulders carrying  
 All the world's load of care  
 To thee 'tis such a little thing  
 My trouble too to bear !  
 O Mother Pandurang, I cry,  
 Drive thou me not away,  
 At Hari's feet, I Name lie ;  
 He will not say me nay

The poetry of the mystics is not be judged by the same yardstick with which one judges other poets. Here the soul of the devotee-poet like Namdev is attuned to a very different plane. He is feeling as if his whole being is churned by a superior kind of restlessness. He is not aspiring for mundane attainments like wealth or fame, but is aggrieved by an extraordinary pang of separation. The Sufis in Persian like Jami, Nizami, Attar and Hafiz have expressed this feeling in most poignant terms. And so have the Bhaktas and saint-poets.

Namdev wrote :

*Mohi lagai talabeli*  
*Bachharai binu gai Akeli*  
*Panila binu minu talaphe*  
*Aise Ram Nam binu bapura Nama*  
*Jaise tapte nirmal ghama*  
*Taise Ram Nam binu bapuro Nama*

(I am feeling acute restlessness,  
 I am like the calf feeling lonely without the cow  
 Just as the fish is without water  
 Poor Nama is without Rama's Name  
 Just as the heat of pure fire is unbearable  
 So poor Nama is without Rama's Name)

Dr. R.D. Ranade has given many examples from Namdev and contemporary saints expressing their heart-readings which elucidate the core of pure subjective lyrics :



"The great characteristic of the Abhangas of Namdeva is the manner in which we see always how his heart pants for God. Like Tukarama at a later date Namdeva also experienced much heart-rending for the attainment of God. This state has been characterised in Western Mysticism as "the Dark Night of the Soul". We will see how, in the case of Namdeva, this state was experienced partially. Later, we will see how Tukarama experienced it fully. We may say that Namdeva in this respect approaches Tukarama more than Jnanadeva. "As a bee's heart might be set upon the fragrance of a flower, or as a fly might take resort to honey, similarly does my mind cling to God", says Namdeva (Abg 11). "I am called lordless, lordless ; but Thou art called the Lord. I am called fallen fallen; but Thou art called the reliever of the fallen. Poor, poor, do they call me ; but they call Thee the reliever of the poor in heart. They call me afflicted, afflicted ; but they call Thee one who wouldst relieve people of their afflictions. If Thou were not to listen to me, says Namdeva, would it not be a matter of shame ? (Abg 13). In this world, there is nobody else except Thee for whom I care, or who cares for me (Abg 14). The little Samsara has had the power to conceal Thee, who art all encompassing. Thou obliged me to cling to Samsara, and thus bringest to me the treachery my Lord. I have now come to know Thy wiles, says Namdeva ; I shall take any measure I will (Abg 16). If the moon were to satisfy the desire of the Chakora, would her light be diminished for the obligation ? (Abg 18). If a cloud were to quench the thirst of a Chataka bird, would his greatness be thereby lessened ? (Abg 19) Thou art my bird, I am Thy young one, Thou art my deer, I am Thy cub (Abg 20). If the mother bird moves out of her nest in the morning, its young ones keep looking out for her. Similarly, does my mind look out for Thee, my Lord (Abg 22). If a child falls into fire, its mother comes to its succour with an over-powered heart. If a fire envelopes a forest, the mother deer is afflicted for its young one. In a similar way, says Namdeva, Thou must care for me (Abg 23). When I

consider that at the end of my life, I shall have to depart alone ; when I think that my mother who bore me in her womb for nine months will cruelly stand aside ; when I find the futility of the affection which sisters and brothers bear towards me ; when I find that children and wife shall stay away when my body will be burning upon the funeral pile ! when I contemplate how friends and relatives shall leave me in the cemetery and walk away ; I then begin to shed tears. My Throat chokes ; I find that darkness reigns everywhere ; my only resort is Thy feet, says Namdeva (Abg 24). I contemplate an immolation of myself at Thy feet. The river of desire, however, carries me away. I cannot be rescued from the river by any other swimmer except Thee ; hence throw Thyself into the river with Thy apparel to rescue me. The necklace of the nine jewels of devotion has been submerged in the river. The grounds of courage and discrimination have been broken to pieces. Faith, the rope by which one might swim out, has been surrendered in twain. The great fish plying into the waters, namely Anger is intent upon carrying me to the bottom of the river. Thou shouldst swiftly leap into the river to take me out, says Namdeva (Abg 28) With tears in the eyes and with out-stretched hands, Namdeva is looking out for his Lord (Abg 30). Shameless as he is, with his life-breath centred in his throat, he has been thinking about Thee night and day (Abg 31). The three fires of the physical, metaphysical and accidental evils, have been burning fiercely before me. When wouldst Thou rain from heaven, O Cloud of Mercy ? I have been caught in the flames of grief and infatuation. The wild conflagration of anxiety has spread all round. I am going to the bottom of the river and coming up again. Unless Thou, O Cloud of Mercy, run to my succour, my life-breath will depart from me (Abg 32). Thou shouldst not consider my merit. I am an ocean of sin incarnate. From top to toe, I have committed sins innumerable (Abg 35). Do you think that I shall grow weary, and go away from your presence, feeling that you would not come ? The rope of my life I shall bind to Thy feet, and shall bring Thee to me at pleasure. It is best therefore that



Thou shouldst see me of Thy own accord (Abg 36). I shall spread the meshes of my love and catch Thee, alive. I shall make my heart a prison for Thee, and shall intern Thee inside. I shall beat Thee with the voice of Self-identity, and Thou shall surely ask for compassion (Abg 37). Thy generosity has been falsely praised. Thou givest only when Thou hast taken away (Abg 40). The great Bali threw his body at Thy feet and then Thou hadst compassion on him. Thy devotees have sacrificed their lives for Thy sake. Thou shouldst not forget that it is these devotees that have brought name to Thee (Abg 41). If a king leaves away his wife does she not rule over the world? If the son of an Emperor has committed a fault; is it possible that any other man might bring him to book? We may possess as many faults as we like, and yet our faults are in the Lord (Abg 44). We shall speak such words as will make God nod in joy. Love shall fill every part of our body, and our mouth will utter the name of God. We shall dance in the performance of Kirtana, shall light the lamp of knowledge in this world, and live in a place which is beyond the highest. All power has come to me, says Namdeva on account of the gift of my Spiritual Teacher (Abg 47).

Such spiritual unrest stems from all-dedicating faith. Three translations from Macnicol quoted on the next page will illustrate Namdev's complete renunciation of all material desires and unstained and unflinching belief in the Grace of the Supreme :

A Vow

One thing

My Mother Thou

Generally, in appreciating poetry one is struck by a 'dreamless shower of light' as Keats calls it. It is merely a 'disentanglement of the soul of fact, as Ruskin described, or a 'a doom's day record of the soul' as Ibsen bitterly dubbed it. Victor Hugo, who was himself a poet, believed that 'Art transcends the domains of space and time. So did Abhinavagupta in his work on Sanskrit poetic describe a genius as *dik-kalateet*. While the purposes and objectives of poetry differed in the West and the East in general, and India in particular, the common

feature in the persons who had higher religious experiences throughout the world are very similar.

It seems that the poet's primary concern is words, his expression and self-clarification, or his own quest through his art. But the concern of a saint or devotee or mystic is not that concrete. He is constantly having the glimpses of some type of a supra-sensual Vision which he is unable to put through or across. Thus both the poet and the spiritual seeker have a constant problem of a loss of communication with their outer reality, yet the nature of involvement at the aesthetic and the 'existential' levels are distinguishable. This brings us to the problem of a common language of criticism and its inadequacy in such cases.

Writing about saint-poets like Namdev, the difficulty is all the more accentuated as their expression is so simple and direct, so much devoid of any trace of artificiality or any suggestion of hide-and-seek between word and meaning, that its stark, naked, undecorated form brings it very close to modern abstract art. And then any further explanation seems to be unnecessary, a mere verbal exercise, a word-play which is futile.

### A VOW

No. 333, (*Deha java athava raho*)

Whether I live or perish, yet,  
On Pandurang my faith is set  
Thy feet, Lord, I will ne'er forsake-  
To thee this solemn vow I make  
Thy holy name my lips shall tell :  
Within my heart thy love shall dwell  
This, Kesav is thy Nama's vow  
O aid me to fulfil it, thou

### ONE THING

501 (*Heci deva pai magata*)

One thing I of my Lord entreat,  
That I may ever serve his feet



That I in Pandhari abide  
 Always his holy saints beside  
 Or high or low my birth may be ;  
 Still, Hari, I would worship thee  
 Lord of Kamala Nama prays,  
 O grant me this through all my days

### MY MOTHER THOU

270 (*Tu majhi mauli*)

My Mother thou; thy sucking babe am I :  
 Feed me with love, my Pandurang, I cry.  
 I am the calf with thee the mother cow ;  
 Thy milk, my Pandurang withhold not now.  
 I am thy fawn, the mother doe thou art ;  
 Remp the world's snare, my Pandurang, apart.  
 Thou mother bird and I among thy brood ;  
 O fly, my Pandurang, and bring me food.  
 Ah, heart's beloved, hear thy Name say.  
 On every side thou hedgest up my way.

But some poems do have a social content and they are easily analysable. They are criticisms against the corrupt practices of those times which paraded under the name of religion; they are satires on social maladies. Ten abhangas out of his two thousand, quoted below from Ranade's *Mysticism in Maharashtra* would reveal his attitude towards the worldly pursuits in his pays.

“Namdeva very often makes use of his abhangas to discourse on social topics. He tells us that it is impossible that the pursuit of God can be coupled with a life of Samsara. If it had been possible for a man to find God while he was pursuing Samsara then Sanaka and others would not have grown mad after God. If it had been Possible for him to see God while carrying on the duties of a householder, the great Suka would not have gone to the forest to seek God. Had it been possible for people to find God in their homes, they would not have left them to find out. Namdev has left away all these things, and is appoa-

ching God in utter submission (Abg 83). Our one goal should be the vision of God, whatever pursuit we might be undertaking. Children send a kite into the sky with a rope in their hands ; but their attention is upon the kite, and upon the rope. A woman from Gujerat goes with pitcher piled upon pitcher, moving her hands freely but her attention is riveted upon the pitchers. An unchaste woman has her heart always set upon her lover. A thief set his heart upon other people's gold. A covetous man has his attention ever directed towards his treasure. We may carry on any pursuit says Namdeva, provided we always think of God (Abg 85). We should always think of death, says Namdeva, in whatever pursuit we might be engaged. As when a thief is being carried to the hanging place, death is approaching him at every step ; as when a man is plying his axe at the root of a tree, its life is diminishing every moment ; similarly, whatever we may be doing, we must suppose that death is always approaching us (Abg 90). We should be supremely indifferent to qualities like good and evil. All objects of sense should be as indifferent to us as either a serpent or a beautiful maiden is to a man who has gone to sleep. We should regard dung and gold, or a jewel or a stone, as of equal value. Let the sky come and envelop us, or let cinders be poured on our head, we should not allow our life in Atman to be disturbed. You may praise us or censure us, says Namdeva, we shall always live in the joy of God (Abg 91). To pin our faith upon stone-images is a vain pursuit. A stone god and an illusory devotee can never satisfy each other. Such Gods have been broken to pieces by the Turks, or have been flung in water, and yet they do not cry. Show me not to such deties of iron, says Namdeva to God (Abg 94). Is it not wonderful that people should give up the animate, and hold the inanimate as superior to it. They pluck a living *Tulsi* plant, and with it worship an inanimate stone. They pluck the leaves of *Bela* and throw them in numbers upon a lingam of Shiva. They kill a living ram, and say they are performing the Soma sacrifice. They besmear a stone with red lead, and children and women fall prostrate before it. The performance of an



Agnihotra means death to the Kusa grass and the *pimpala* sticks. People worship a serpent made of mud, but they take cudgels against a living serpent. All these pursuits are vain, says Namdeva ; the only pursuit of value is the utterance of Name of God (Abg 95) A beautiful woman is the cause of sorrow, and an ugly woman the cause of happiness ; for the one incites love, while the other does not (Abg 100, 101). Contact with other women, says Namdeva, is the sure cause of ruin. In that way did Ravana die. In that way was Bhasmasura reduced to ashes. In that way Moon became consumptive. In that way Indra had his body covered with thousand holes (Abg 102). How different it is to find the following pairs together ; gold and fragrance, diamond and softness, a Yogin and purity, a talking god, a moving wish tree, and a milch-elephant, a rich man with compassion, a tiger with mercy, and fire with coolness ; a beautiful woman who is chaste, a hearer who is attentive, and a preacher who knows ; a Kshatriya who is grave, a sandal tree covered with flowers, and a handsome man who is virtuous. Namdeva tells us that us that it is impossible to find such pairs in life (Abg 106).

After acquainting oneself with Namdev's Abhangas which are outpourings of the devotee in anguish and as a social commentator disliking all hypocrisy, I would like to say something which may be especially interesting to a student of modern literature. No other saint-poet except Namdev has written elegies or poems in memorium of his companions and other saint poets. Namdev saw Dnyaneshwar (1275—1296) Muktabai (1279—1298) Nivrittinath (1273—1298), three important Marathi saints and poets, passing away before his own eyes. They had taken *Samadhi*, a kind of self-immolation by burying oneself in the ground. Namdev has composed Abhangas on these events. They are worth studying, as they reveal his attitude towards Death, a very important aspect of mystic poetry.

Here are some excerpts from Namdev's Abhangas on *Dnyaneshwar Samadhi* :

My heart aches, my mind is not at rest  
 I am like the fish without water  
 All the ten directions are vacant and melancholy  
 They are all mourning within  
 It is as if someone has hit me with a heavy iron rod  
 Life has come up to the throat, for Dnyaneshwar  
 Nama says, O God, I feel so lonely  
 All these great Yogis are passing away

Nivirittidev says we should try to console ourselves  
 But the heart does not have any peace  
 The embankment of a well-built tank is broken  
 The current runs helter-skelter to ten directions  
 It is as if the string of a well-packed hay-stack  
 Is broken and hay spreads all over the wilderness  
 Without the she-deer the forest-dwelling is empty  
 The fawns are wandering to ten directions  
 When the father and the mother left us  
 Such a calamity had not fallen on us  
 Nama says, O God, it is like a wild forest-fire  
 Console the elder brother Nivritti.  
 Nivritti Sopan Muktai the youngest  
 Are clinging to Pandurang's heart  
 All minds were wringing and making loud sounds  
 They are remembering in their minds Dnyandev  
 With feelings torn asunder, even the saints are disturbed  
 If Nama is restless, no wonder  
 Nivritti remembers him very much  
 Sopan and Muktabai are sobbing loudly  
 Dnyaneshwar was like our Mother and Father  
 Now there is no shelter over us, no resort  
 When Brahmins troubled him on way to Pratishtan  
 He made the he-buffalo speak Vedanta  
 When Changdev came riding a tiger  
 Dnyandev defeated his pride



I remember all those different words  
Which were sins to the believer.

Some Abhangas as on the *Samadhi* of Muktabai are given  
below in as close a translation as possible :

Nivritti Muktai saw the place with their eyes  
Their hearts swelled up with emotion  
When Father and Mother left us  
We were very young O Panduranga  
Nivritti and Dnyandev used to beg for food  
Sopan was protecting us  
With your grace, Hari, we passed the time  
Here is a fair of holy men gathered  
Nama says all have heavy hearts  
Panduranga tries to console them  
Rishis says O Hari this is a great disaster  
How shall our souls be saved  
Nobody is conscious of the other  
They all say, O Narayan, Death has come  
When lightning fell from the naked sky  
Muktabai vanished at that time  
In the Heaven a million bells chimed  
Muktabai became one with God  
For three long hours there was light in three worlds  
When she was lost in the Niranjana  
The sky which protected was as if endlessly lost  
Nama asks : where is Muktabai

The Abhangas on the *samadhi* of the eldest brother Nivrittinath  
have the same deep note of pathos :

Whatever pleasures we enjoyed  
O Narayana, I remember them  
At every step Nivrittiraj had to struggle  
How much shall I remember and what  
The passing away of the Younger before the elder one  
Narayana has done something contrary

Something contrary has touched my mind  
 The falling water from the corners has ran to the roof  
 The worst shock was Muktabai's going away  
 There was no conversation before it  
 Nama says Vithoba you hear all our speech  
 The hearts of all were wrung  
 Nara Mahada Gonda Vitha all mourned  
 When the stone was put on the *samadhi*  
 Gandharvas and gods were terribly anxiety-laden  
 Loudly lament Nara and Vitha  
 Gonda and Mahada fell on the ground unconscious,  
 Visoba Khechar was also pained  
 The sun disappeared, all over it was dark  
 The greatest Yogi Nivrittiraj is gone  
 Gone are great souls, those incarnations of beginninglessness  
 O God, now only remembrances  
 Nama says, Hari, I cannot keep patience  
 My sobbing overwhelms my being

In these poems there is a strange tension between the human-all-too-human feeling of separation and also the mystic poet's elation on courting Death in this manner of *samadhi* : a subtle conflict between individual sorrow and social sense of reaching the same of self-realization. Here Namdev the poet has an upper hand over Namdev the philosopher.

Namdev's poetry has this charm of simplicity, directness, transparency and ruggedness of its own kind. It is not highly intellectualized or cerebral poetry of Dnyaneshwar, nor has it the sentimentality of Muktabai. It has a different timbre and tone ; it springs from a total life-experience.

Sri Jagannath Raghunath Ajgaonkar has written an interesting book (anthology) 'Old Marathi Saint-poets.' Select 52 Abhangas of Namdev are given in this work. If one analyses these hymns from the point of view of recurrent themes and imagery, the following patterns are very commonly seen :

- (1) Mother-and-child
- (2) No distinction between the high and the lowly
- (3) Fire consuming all sins



- (4) A diamond which is self-illuminating
- (5) Grace is like the shade of clouds or trees
- (6) God as the patron of orphans
- (7) Mind dives in the pond of love
- (8) Young ones of the bird fed by the parents
- (9) Deer and fawn
- (10) Book-knowledge versus direct communion
- (11) Life is transient like water drying in sun
- (12) False saints are like scarecrows in fields
- (13) This world and the other as two banks of a river
- (14) Man is both in the world like one in a hall of pictures or mirrors
- (15) Being a watchman at the door of saints in my Heaven
- (16) God's name is sweeter than grapes and plantains mixed in sugar
- (17) The dust of the feet of saints is my place of pilgrimage
- (18) Death takes me like the thief being carried to the scaffold
- (19) The tongue croaks like a frog; in place of God's name it talks of kingdoms
- (20) Glimpse of God is like a lamp in darkness

In this work there is one Abhang No. 51 which is very different from his other lyrics, in theme as well as treatment. So I quote that poem in full. It is influenced by the Virat-Rupa-Darshan in Gita, where Krishna shows his sublime and terrible immensity. The description of the Fearful World-destroyer is so graphic :

Your ignorant child Prahlad entreated you  
 Bring that Lord of three worlds  
 "Now bring me down ; where is my Prahlad ?  
 Who has troubled him ?"  
 Opening the mouth wide open,  
 Saliva flowing constantly  
 Eyes like the fire in the ocean  
 Consuming the reservoir of water

The family of Nagas was destroyed  
 Eight keepers of directions were afraid  
 In the Heaven there was disturbance  
 In Amarvati, the capital of Indra  
 Then the demons were called, iron sounded clashing  
 on iron  
 Frightened sky roared, the Earth trembled  
 By four hands coiling it  
 He tore it by crushing it down  
 He looked like Rudra at the end of deluge  
 So seemed Hari  
 But the Devil won't die in any manner  
 He put him on his knees  
 He used his nails and opened his belly  
 Hurriedly he powdered the bones  
 The gods danced for they were happy  
 The devil thus got salvation  
 Namaya's Master is kindness  
 He is the succour for devotees

Namdev's poetry can be compared with metaphysical poets in other Indian languages and in English. In Hindi Kabir, in Bengali Dadu, in Telugu Vemana, in Gujarati Akho, in Tamil Manikkavachagar and Jnansambandar, in Kannada Basaveshwar have all the same two-fold qualities : on the one hand their poetry is the outpouring of sincere hearts trying to attain the ultimate salvation by breaking the cycle of rebirth, Karma and *sansar*; on the other, there seems to be juxtaposed in their unconscious a severe criticism of all shams and hypocrisies of ritualistic rigidities and false preachings, the way of self-torture is as much a target of their acid attack as the way of indulgence in senses. All these saint-poets want to go beyond the visible and the tangible, they have their ultimate faith in some transcendental power, which cannot be fully comprehended by Reason. So they feel that language fails them, they prefer to talk in symbols and allegories.

Andrew Marvel or John Donne, Blake or Browning have



this metaphysical, extra-sensuous quality in their poetry. Their poetic idiom is oblique and it cannot be understood without the proper philosophical and theological background. It is equally true of Namdev or other Indian saint-poets of this category. In fact writing or composing poetry was never their primary intention. Poetry came in their way like one of the means of self-exploration and devotion to their destination. In them poetry and spiritual search became so unified that the two could never be separately dealt with.

Namdev's hymns in the Adi-Granth according to Max Arthur Macauliffe (Vol. 8 of the Sikh religion p. 40 of the Bhagats) "belong to three periods of his life—boyhood, when he was an idolater, manhood when he was emancipating himself from Hindu superstitions, and old age when his hymns became conformable to the ideas of religious reforms at the time and to the subsequent teaching of the Sikh Gurus. It is on account of his later and more matured opinions that his writings have been incorporated in the Sacred book of the Sikhs."

**NAMDEV'S POETRY**  
**PART I**

**Selected Padas of Namdev**  
**Rendered into English by the Author**

## **Namdev's Marathi Abhangas (Poems)**

**From *Shri Sant Namdev Maharaj Yanchi Abhanganchi Gatha***

**Edited by H. B. P. Vishnu Narasinha Joag**

**Published by Chitrashala Press Poona in Saka 1879**

**No. 4 (*Gane jari mhano*)**

**If I have to sing of Ganesh and Sharda**

**There is none except them**

**If I have to dance I dance the *Tandava* of Shiva**

**He is the one who knows to dance**

**If I have to recite I recite the Four (Vedas)**

**If anything is left from one I do say**

**If one has to know one should know all the Eighteen**

**Whatever is still left I should know**

**If there are any artists they are the sun and moon**

**They show the twelve and sixteen in the sky**

**Nama says I have staked all**

**Let Keshav (God) take me as his own**

**No. 10 (*Chakravaka pakshi*)**

**The *Chakravaka* bird pines and calls when separated**

**So it has happened to me**

**When the mother is lost the young one cries**

**So it has happened to me**

**When the calf is not seen the cow lows**

**So it has happened to me**

**Without water the fish are restless**

**So it has happened to me**



Nama says I feel sore in the heart  
I am missing you very much

No. 11 (*Kaya Majhe ata*)

Why do you see my end  
Without thee I cry  
Even if you are busy, see me awhile  
Come O Come, O God, Nama calls you

Come running  
Come running  
Come running  
Come running

No. 30 (*Mayur adi Pakshi*)

Peacock and birds dance  
Rivers flow to the brim  
On the earth saffron and musk is sprinkled  
Bliss in the heart of all  
*Vimanas* gather, God of gods comes  
Gandharvas sing in seven notes  
The clouds roar very slowly  
Instruments play differently  
Nama says there are drums in the heaven  
Apsaras are dancing happily

No. 76 (*Ekade Shrikrishna khelat asatan*)

Once Shrikrishna was playing  
Suddenly he reaches a Gopi's house  
Rubbing her eyes with both the hands  
Gopi asks "What has happened?"  
Krishna says "My eyes ache,  
I do not know what remedy shall I do?"  
If I get the milk of a mother  
Eyes will be cured by putting it in them  
Gopi says I would give this milk  
You put it in your eyes and get cured  
God says if you will take out the milk  
How can it bring remedy  
If you allow me to squeeze your breast  
It can give the remedy immediately

Listening this Gopi wants to beat him  
He takes to his heels says Nama

No. 78 (*Nishi prapt hotan bhratarache seje*)

When it was dark, on the bed of her husband  
Gopi was sleeping happily

Very cleverly God entered there  
And what a funny thing he did

He took the beard of the husband  
and braids of the wife  
And joined them together in a knot

He went away after doing this fun  
It dawned later

Gopi got up for milking the cows  
Her hair were pulled by the beard

The wife asked the husband  
How are you not yet satisfied

The husband's beard was pulled  
And he also got very angry

You become so arrogant  
You pull me this way

Nama said they both got up  
And both wondered in their own minds

No. 576 (*Akash gadgadi*)

The sky is overcast with roaring clouds  
Lightning flashes

Clouds burst continuous heavy rains  
The Son of Devaki saves us from this  
The Cow-herds call him Kanha  
Govardhan hill was lifted by his own hands  
Nama says he saves

No. 585 (*Ratra kali*)

The night is dark the pitcher is black  
The waters of Yamuna are dark, O Mother

The armlet is black the bracelets are black  
 One string of black beads is in the neck, O Mother  
 I am dark my brassiere is black  
 The sari I dress is black O Mother  
 I am afraid to go to fetch water  
 You send the dark image with me O Mother  
 Vishnudev Nama's mistress is black  
 Krishna's image is very dark O Mother

**No. 691 (*Jiva Vitthal*)**

The being is Vitthal, the soul is Vitthal  
 God is Vitthal, Vitthal  
 Father is Vitthal, Mother is Vitthal  
 Relations are Vitthal  
 This world is Vitthal, the other world is Vitthal  
 Eternal saviour is Vitthal  
 Name is Vitthal. Form is Vitthal  
 The saviour of the fallen is Vitthal

**No. 692 (*Tirthe Vitthal*)**

The place of pilgrimage is Vitthal  
 The field is Vitthal  
 God is Vitthal God's worship is Vitthal  
 Father is Vitthal, Mother is Vitthal  
 Brother is Vitthal, Family is Vitthal  
 Guru is Vitthal, Guru-god is Vitthal  
 The destination is Vitthal, the movement is Vitthal  
 Nama says I found Vitthal  
 And so there is no fear of death

**No. 704 (*Vitthal kanade bolu jane*)**

Vitthal know to speak Kannada  
 His-language Pundalik did not know  
 Twenty-eight ages have passed  
 Both do not speak to each other  
 Keeping the hands on the waist  
 He is standing on the banks of Bhinvara river



**Nama says my master  
Is standing for the work of the devotee .**

**No. 973 (*Vache mhanta Ganga Ganga*)**

**Uttering the name of Ganga repeatedly  
All sins vanish**

**One who sees Brahmapuri  
For him there is no land of Death**

**One who bathes at Kushavart  
Dwells in heaven**

**Nama says one who does the perambulation  
He shall not be born again**

**No 1020 (*Nam tenchi rup*)**

**The name is the form and the form is the name  
The two are not differentiated**

**God assumed form and became name  
So he was consecrated in the Name-Veda**

**There is no other mantra than the name  
Whosoever tell are foolish and ignorant**

**Namdev says the name is Keshava  
The loving devotees know of it**

**No. 1045 (*Dhig dhig to gram*)**

**Fie upon that village, fie upon that ashram  
Where one cannot meet the saints**

**Fie upon that wealth, fie upon that progeny  
Where there is no hymn for all**

**Fie upon that thought, fie upon that action  
Where the speech is not devoted to God**

**Fie upon that speaker, fie upon that speech  
Where the story of Panduraya is not told**

**Fie upon that song, fie upon that learning  
Where the name of Ram is not like currency .**

**Nama says fie upon that life  
Which is without Narayan**

No. 1074 (*Ata ahe nahi*)

It is, and the next moment you see it, it is not  
 The pleasures of wealth and lust  
 Act in and think of the right  
 Realizing this keep your faith in Name  
 Some are blinded by the power of the self  
 They do not remember how are they surrounded  
 by Death

Some are proud of this learning and their high caste  
 But they are taken to the underworld by the dark  
 qualities

Falsehood, greed, avarice and delusion  
 The whole life-span is wasted in these  
 Nama says kindly come and emancipate  
 Such a life O Keshav O my father and mother

No. 1792 (*Meech majhe dev*)

I am my god and I am my devotee  
 I am fulfilled easily  
 Bondage and emancipation are mere dillusion  
 How was the mind deluded  
 Vitthal thoughtfully showed me the happiness  
 Whatever was countess is lost  
 Nama says I have found a nice pretext  
 I have become at once the slave of Hari

No. 1794 (*Bhit nahi*)

Not afraid not afraid  
 Eternally vigilant  
 Open *Samadhi* open *Samadhi*  
 Inside clear conscience  
 Why do you entangle why do you  
 Pandhari-rai, save me  
 Nama says O life of the world  
 O Narayan, save me

No. 1796 (*Nidristache seje*)

On the bed of one who is in sound asleep  
 Whether serpent or *Urvashi* makes no difference  
 Our Kashiraj has done such kindness  
 At the dinner of atonement all aligned  
 Cow-dung and gold appear the same  
 Diamond or stone of one form  
 Once I have grasped that divine feet  
 Let fire rain the repose is unbroken  
 Nama says let anyone praise or deride  
 We have become one with bliss of Brahma

No. 1812 (*Amhi parit Choklet*)

We are fine washermen  
 We have washed all wicked and bad people  
 With soap of wisdom  
 The spots are removed instantly  
 We washed them on the stone of Peace  
 We washed them clean in the Ganga of knowledge  
 Parabrahma we have become  
 And thus become one with the Bliss

No. 1843 (*Doi bodavuni*)

Shaven-headed commits sin  
 The poor body is still demanding  
 This is no *sanyasa* (monk-hood)  
 One should be disinterested in lust  
 The cat has lost the eyesight  
 Yet it craves at the sight of the rat  
 The prostitute became a queen  
 She remembers her early life  
 Nama says by changing the dress  
 The inner shame is not hidden

No. 1847 (*Devi jadi-butti*)

You show these roots as medicines and black magic  
 What use is this walking naked



You show severe self-control and you fast  
 What use is wandering from country to country  
 What is the use of thus being exposed  
 When everything is the Eternal  
 Nama says these methods are of no avail  
 Firstly you catch Vithoba's feet

No. 1860 (*Kaya karuni tirthatane*)

What is the use of pilgrimage  
 If the mind is full of vice  
 What is the use of meditation  
 If the heart has no repentance  
 The sins of the mind and the will  
 Cannot be washed by pilgrimage  
 Nama says all is simple  
 Sin is atoned by repentance

## **Sant Namdev ki Hindi Padavali**

**Edited by Bagirath Mishra and Rajnarain**

### **Rag Todi**

#### ***Hari Nam Hira***

**Hari's Name is a gem**

**Hari's name is a gem**

**Taking Hari's name**

**All pain is removed**

**Hari's name is caste**

**Hari's name is sub-caste**

**Hari's name is revolution**

**In the whole life**

**Hari's name is**

**Accumulation of happiness**

**Hari's name cuts**

**The knot of Yama**

**Hari's name is**

**Essence of all worlds**

**Hari's name takes**

**One beyond the stream**

**No. 14 (*Teri Teri gati to hi janai*)**

**You alone know your ways**

**I, a small fry, how can I describe**

**As you say so you are not**

**As you are the Gosain has so said**

Salt does not separate from water  
 So God is our soul  
 Friendship of holy men, meeting the saints  
 Nama says. Ram is the protector

No. 18 (*Ka Karaun jati*)

Why should I bother about caste or sub-caste  
 I serve Ram-Nam day and night  
 My mind is the measuring rod  
 My tongue is the scissors  
 With Ram's grace  
 Cut the knot of Yama  
 Let me stitch the coat of Ananta's name  
 Stitching which the fear of Yama is gone  
 It would stitch in such a way  
 How can I live without Ram  
 The needle of memory, the thread of love  
 Nama's mind is attached to Hari

Rag Ramgiri

No. 104 (*Pande deh arathi lagai*)

Pande, make your life meaningful

I am seven years  
 And my mother is of five years  
 Unknown indescribable think and see  
*Susai* is hidden by dog  
 The fish of the water climbed the sky  
 The tiger is eaten by the cow  
 Inside the ocean the drop is tested  
 In the drop the ocean is lost  
 Namdev has only One  
 The Unseen cannot be seen



Rag Aswari

No. 107 (*Jhilimili jhilimili*)

Twinkling shining stars  
So shine the three dear worlds  
Lines in sky and yet not in sight  
If you try to catch it escape the grasp  
Lamp burns without oil or wick  
The Eternal light burns day and night  
Says Namdev I touched the Immoral feet  
The soul was freed and the real Essence was seen

Ghuman Edition

No. 194 (*Madhav kaise kiji Jog*)

Madhav how shall I perform yoga ?  
There is great difficulty in doing yoga  
I could not leave the world attachment  
Neither do I know living, nor my doing  
I am bound with fine bindings  
Neither have I knowledge, nor meditation  
Hari is filling everything  
I am orphan without virtues  
I am separated from you  
Namdev says let me go to the resort of Hari  
Otherwise people would scoff

## **Namdevache Abhanga**

*From Ajgaonkar's Book*

### **No. 1 (*Vitevari ubha*)**

Standing on the brick the saviour of the poor  
He extends both his arms to meet all  
He does not see the good or bad qualities  
He meets them again and again O Kashiraja  
Such a kind soul asks for everyone  
He enquires about the great and small  
He gives an equal darshan to all  
He is standing equipoised  
Nama says he likes the saints  
He is standing to embrace them

### **No. 6 (*Sampada sohela*)**

The wealth and festivities do not please me  
I am fond of only Pandhari  
I love only to go to Pandhari  
When is the Ashandi Ekadashi  
When will the Ekadashis of Ashadi and Kartik  
would fall  
He is asking every person going that way  
Nama says he is so much absorbed with the idea  
That Chakrapani is waiting for him

### **No. 17 (*Tujhiya satvene*)**

Vedas speak with your power  
The sun moves because of you  
You are such omnipotent master of universe  
Knowing this secret I came to you  
The clouds rain, sit on mountains  
The wind asks of your power

Nama says nothing moves at all  
 You are O God Panduranga the basis and support  
 No. 156 (*Na Padhave ved*)

Do not study Vedas, no need to know the scriptures  
 Only remember the tenets of Nama  
 No knowledge of Brahma, no renouncement  
 Simple path of Bhakti with the saints  
 With all the rituals how many in this kali  
 Have really crossed this cycle of births  
 Nama says the secret is told to me by saints  
 There is no other peace and resort than this



## **Hindustani Padas**

**No. 2142 (*Heen deen meri jati*)**

I am low and poor by caste O Pandhari rai  
Why did you make Nama a tailor  
He made Nama with the gongs, he came to the temple  
The Brahmin priest drove him out  
Nama said 'Allakh' behind the temple  
The temple began to turn round wherever Nama  
turned  
Cows are of many colours, milk is of one colour  
How are you Brahmin and how are we 'Shudras  
My mind is the needle, my body is the thread  
Nama the tailor bows at the feet of Khecharji

**No. 2145 (*Ham to bhule Thakur*)**

We are lost in the Master  
Why do you have false frenzy  
The rivulet became ocean  
Why do you weep O well  
The lemon became sandal in the company of sandal  
Why should asaphoetida weep  
By Guru's grace Nama became a Sadhu  
Seeing this these hypocrites started weeping

**No. 2224 (*May na hota*)**

Had there been no mother, no father  
Had there been no action, no body  
We would not have been there, nor you  
Who would have come from where  
There is nobody else except Ram  
Just as the birds dwell on the tree  
Had there been no moon, no sun  
Water and wind would have been one

There would have been no scriptures, no Vedas  
Where did this rebirth come from ?  
Khechar Buchar Tulsi-garland  
I received them as blessings of the Guru  
Nama says Pranava is highly shining and fiery  
Only Sadguru can show it

**HYMNS OF NAMDEV**  
**PART II**

**Included in the Guru Granth Sahib**  
**Rendered into English by M. A. Macauliffe**  
***(The Sikh Religion Vol. 6)***



## **Hymns of Namdev Included in Gurm Granth Sahib**

### *Gauri*

( 1 )

O God, Thou didst cause stones to float ;  
Why should not man float over by repeating Thy name ?  
Thou didst save the courtesan, the shapless hunchback,  
the hunstman, and Ajamal

Even the murderer who shot Krishan in the foot was  
saved—

I am a sacrifice to those who utter God's name—

Bidur, the son of a handmaiden, Sudama, and Ugarsen,  
who obtained regal state ;

Men without devotion, without penance, without family  
and without good works, were saved by Nama's Lord.

### *Asa*

( 2 )

There is one God of various manifestations contained in  
and filling everything ; withersoever I look there is He

Maya's variegated picture hath so bewitched the world,  
that few know God.

Everything is God, everything is God, there is nothing but  
God.

One string holdeth hundreds and thousands of beads ;  
God is the warp and woof.

Waves and foam and bubbles cannot be distinct from  
water.

This illusion, the world, is the play of the Supreme God ;  
on reflection thou shalt not find it different from Him.

Fleeting phantoms, illusions of dreams man deemeth real

advantages.

My guru instilled into me right ideas, and when I awoke to reason my mind accepted them.

Saith Namdev, behold the creation of God, and reflect on it in thy mind ;

In every heart and in all things uninterruptedly there is only the one God.

( 3 )

If I bring a pitcher and fill it with water to bathe the idol,  
Forty-two lakhs of animal species are in the water ; God  
is contained in them ; why should I bathe Him ?

Wherever I go there God is contained ;

God supremely happy ever sporteth.

If I bring flowers and weave a garland to worship the  
idol,

The bee hath first smelled the flowers ; God is contained  
in the bee ; why should I weave Him a garland ?

If I bring milk and cook it with khir to feed the idol,

The calf hath first defiled the milk by tasting it ;

God is contained in the calf ; why should I feed Him ?

In this world is God ; in the next world is God ; there is  
no part of the world without Him.

Thou art, O God, in every place ; Nama representeth,  
Thou fillest the whole earth.

( 4 )

My heart is a yard measure, my tongue a shears.

With it I measure and cut off Death's noose.

What care I for caste ? What care I for lineage ?

I repeat the name of God day and night :

I dye what ought to be dyed, and I sew what ought to  
be sewed.

I cannot live for a ghari without God's name ;

I perform worship and sing God's praises ;

During the eight watches of the day I meditate on my  
Lord.

My needle is of gold, my thread of silver—

Nama's soul is attached to God.

## ( 5 )

The serpent casteth its slough, but not its poison :  
 Since thy heart is not pure,  
 Why perform mock meditation and repetition of  
 God's name ?  
 Thou art as the crane watching for fish in the water.  
 The man who eateth the food of lions,  
 Is called the god of thieves.  
 Nama's Lord hath settled the quarrel ;  
 Drink God's elixir, O double-faced one.

## ( 6 )

If thou see the Supreme God, thou shalt have no other  
 desire ;  
 If thou think of the worship of God, thou shalt keep thy  
 mind free from care  
 O my soul, how shalt thou cross over the world's ocean  
 filled with the water of evil passions ?  
 O my soul, thou hast been led astray on seeing the deceit-  
 ful world.  
 A calico-printer's house gave me birth, yet I became  
 saturated with the guru's instruction,  
 Through the favour of holy men Nama hath met God.

*Gujari*

## ( 7 )

If Thou give me an empire, what glory shall it be to me ?  
 If Thou cause me to beg, how shall it degrade me ?  
 Worship God, O my soul, and thou shalt obtain the dig-  
 nity of salvation.  
 And no more transmigration shall await thee.  
 O God, Thou didst create all men and lead them astray in  
 error :  
 He to whom Thou givest understanding knoweth Thee.  
 When I meet the true guru, my doubts shall depart.  
 Whom shall I then worship ? none other would be seen  
 but Thee. One stone is adored.  
 Another is trodden under foot :



If one is a god, the other is also a god—  
Saith Namdev, I worship the true God.

( 8 )

He who hath no trace of impurity, who is beyond impurity, and who is perfumed as with sandal hath taken His seat in my heart.

No one saw Him coming ; who knoweth Him, O sister ?

Who can describe, who can understand the All-pervading and Unknowable ?

As the trace of a bird is not perceived in the sky,

As the path of a fish is not seen in the water,

As a vessel is not filled with the mirage-water of the sky.

Such is God, Nama's Lord, in whom these three qualities are blended ; His coming or going is not seen.

*Sorath*

( 9 )

When I sing of God, then I behold Him ;

Then I, His slave, obtain contentment.

Accept divine instruction, O man ; the true guru shall cause thee to meet God.

Where the heavenly light shineth,

There playeth spontaneous music.

'God's light is all-pervading'—

By the guru's favour I know that.

In the chamber of the heart are jewels

Which glitter there like lightning

God is near, not distant,

And His Spirit completely filleth mine.

Where the inextinguishable sun of God's word shineth,

There earthly lamps grow pale ;

Through the guru's favour I have known this.

God's slave Nama hath been easily absorbed in Him.

( 10 )

A near neighbour asked Nama, 'By whom didst thou have this hut rebuilt ?

'If thou show me the carpenter, I will pay him twice the

wages thou didst.'

'O my sister, my Carpenter cannot be given thee ;

Lo ! my Carpenter pervadeth all things ;

My Carpenter is the Support of the soul.

If any one want such a hut to be built, the Carpenter will require love for His wages

When man breaketh with his family and all his friends, then the Carpenter of His own accord cometh to him.

I cannot describe such a Carpenter ; He is contained in everything and in every place.

As when a dumb man tasteth the great flavour of nectar, if thou ask him, he cannot describe it.

Hear the praises of the Carpenter, my sister—He restrained the ocean and fixed Dhru as the polar star.

Nama's Lord recovered Sita, and bestowed Lanka on Babhikhan.'

( 11 )

Without covering it with leather the drum of the brain playeth ;

Without waiting for the month of Saw n the thunder roareth,

And it raineth without clouds

If any one consider the real state of things,

I have met my dear Lord.

By meeting Him my body hath become perfect;

Having touched the philosopher's stone I have become gold.

In word and thought I have strung the gems of God's name.

I feel real love for God, my doubts are dispelled :

On questioning the guru my mind is satisfied.

As the pitcher is filled with water,

I know that the world is filled with the one God.

When the disciple's mind accepted the guru,

The slave Nama recognized God.

*Dhanasari*

(12)

Men dig deep foundations and build palaces thereon.

Was any one longer lived than Markand who put grass on

his head and thus whiled away his days ?

Only God the Creator is dear to me ;

O man, why art thou proud ? this unsubstantial body shall be destroyed.

The Kauravs, Duryodhan and his brothers used to say, 'Everything is ours.'

Their umbrellas extended over a space of twelve jojans, yet the vultures devoured their bodies.

Lanka was all gold ; was any one greater than Rawan ?

What availed him the elephants tethered at his gate ? In a moment they became the property of others.

The Yadavs practised deception on Durbasa, and obtained the fruit thereof.

God showed mercy to His slave ; Namdev singeth His praises.

( 13 )

I have restrained the ten organs of sense ; the very name of the five evil passions I have erased.

Having extracted the poison from the seventy-two tanks of the heart, I have filled them with ambrosia ;

I shall not allow the poison to return again.

The ambrosial word I utter from my heart ; my spirit I instruct not to attach itself to worldly things.

I have destroyed worldly love with an axe of adamant : I touch the guru's feet and implore him.

Turning away from the world, I have become a servant of the saints and I fear them.

I shall be saved from this world the moment I cease to be entangled by Maya.

Maya is the name of the Power which placeth man in the womb ; abandoning it I shall obtain a sight of God.

The man who worshippeth in this way shall be freed from all fear.

Saith Namdev, O man, why wander abroad ? obtain God in the way I have told thee.

( 14 )

As water is dear to the traveller in Marwar, and the



creeper to the camel ;

As the huntsman's bell at night is dear to the hind, so is God to my soul—

Thy name is dear to the earth, as the odour of flowers is dear to the bumble-bee ;

As the mango is dear to the kokil, so is God to my soul.

As the sun is dear to the sheldarke, as the lake of Mansarowar is dear to the swan ;

As the husband is dear to the wife, so is God to my soul.

As milk is dear to the child, as a torrent of rain to the mouth of the chatrik ;

As water is dear to the fish, so is God to my soul.

All penitents, sidhs, and munis seek God, but few have seen Him.

As Thy name is dear to all creation, so is Vitthal to Nama's heart.

( 15 )

Before the world a lotus was formed ;

From it proceeded Brahma, and from Brahma all men.

know that everything else was produced from Maya, who leadeth the world a dance.

First a voice proceeded from God ;

Afterwards Maya proceeded from God

Through that voice the parts of this Maya and of that God blended and the world was produced.

In this garden of God men dance like water in the pots of a well ;

Women and men dance.

There is no god but God—

Argue not on this point.

If thou have doubts,

God saith, 'Consider in thy heart that this world and I are one.'

The world is like water-pots, sometimes above, sometimes below.

Wandering about I have come to Thy gate.

God—Who art Thou ?

Nama—I am Nama, Sire—  
O Lord, save me from the world which bringeth death.

( 16 )

O Lord, the purification of sinners is Thy daily work ;  
Hail to those saints who have meditated on my God.  
On my forehead is the dust of God's feet,  
Which is far from even demigods, worldly men, munis,  
and saints.

Compassionate to the poor, O God, destroyer of pride,  
Nama hath found the asylum of Thy feet, and is a sacrifice  
unto Thee.

*Todi*

( 17 )

Some say God is near, others that He is far away.  
To say He is near or far is, as it were, to say that a fish  
could climb a date-tree.

Why, Sir, talkest thou nonsense ?  
They who have found God have concealed the fact.  
Men who are pandits shout the Veds,  
But the ignorant Namdev only knoweth God.

18

Who that uttereth God's name retaineth the stain of sin ?  
Sinners have become pure by uttering His name.  
In the company of God His slave Namdev hath acquired  
ocular evidence.

He hath ceased to fast on the eleventh day, and why  
should he go on pilgrimages ?

Saith Namdev, my acts and thoughts have become good.  
Who hath not gone to heaven by uttering the name of God  
under the guru's instruction ?

( 19 )

There is a play on three sets of word.  
There is a pot in a potter's house, an elephant in a king's  
house,

A widow in a Brahmin's house—sing randi, sandi;  
handi O !

Asafoetida in a biniya's house, horns on a buffalo's  
forehead,

A lingam in a temple of Shiv—sing ling, sing, hing O !

Oil in an oilman's house, creepers in a forest,

Plantains in a gardener's house—sing ket, bel, tel O !

Gobind in the company of saints, Krishan in Gokal,

And God in Nama—sing Ram, Siyam, Gobind O !

*Tilang*

( 20 )

Of me who am blind Thy name, O King, is the prop.

I am poor, I am miserable, Thy name is my support.

Bounteous and merciful Allah, Thou art generous ;

I believe that Thou art present before me ;

Thou art a river of bounty, Thou art the Giver, Thou art  
exceeding wealthy :

Thou alone givest and takest, there is none other ;

Thou art wise, Thou art far-sighted ; what conception can  
I form of Thee ?

O Nama's Lord, Thou art the Pardoner, O God.

( 21 )

Halloo ! my Friend, halloo my Friend, how art Thou ?

I am a sacrifice unto Thee, I am a sacrifice unto Thee.

Good is Thy forced labour, exalted Thy name ;

Whence hast Thou come ? where hast Thou been ? and  
whither art Thou going ?

This is the city of Dwaraka ; tell the truth.

Handsome is Thy turban, sweet Thy discourse ,

But Why should there be a Mughal in the city of Dwaraka ?

Among several thousands of people Thou art the only  
Mughal seen ;

Thou art the very picture of the king of sable hue ;

Thou art the Lord of the horse, the Lord of the elephant,  
and the Ruler of men.



Thou art Nama's Lord, the King of all, and the Giver of salvation.

*Bilawal*

( 22 )

The guru hath made my life profitable—  
I have forgotten sorrow and obtained joy within me.  
The guru hath granted me the eye-salve of divine knowledge.

O my soul, without God's name man's life is vain.  
Namdev knoweth God by keeping Him in mind ;  
My soul is absorbed in Him who giveth life to the world.

*Gaund*

( 23 )

Where I to perform the horse-sacrifice,  
Give my weight in gold as alms,  
Bathe at Pryag,  
It would not be equal, O Nama, to singing God's praises.  
O listless man, worship thy God.  
Were I to offer rice-balls at Gaya,  
Dwell at Banaras,  
Recite the four Veds,  
Fulfil all religious offices,  
Restrain my senses under the guru's instruction,  
Perform the six duties of Brahmans,  
Read the conversations between Shiv and his consort—  
All these different occupations would be useless ; O my soul, lay them aside,  
And remember, remember God's name.  
Worship Him, Nama, and thou shalt swim across the world's ocean.

( 24 )

As the deer followeth the huntsman's bell,  
And giveth to its own life rather than cease its attention,  
In the same way I gaze on God.  
I do not leave Him to turn my mind in another direction.

As the kingfisher gazeth on the fish,  
 As the goldsmith meditateth stealing gold while fashion-  
 ing it,  
 As the lustful man gazeth on the wife of another,  
 As the gambler meditateth cheating while playing kauris,  
 So Nama ever meditateth on God's feet—  
 Wherever I gaze there is God.

( 25 )

Float me over, O God, float me over  
 I am unskilful and know not how to swim ; O God, my  
 Father, give me Thine arm,  
 He to whom the true guru hath taught knowledge, is  
 changed in a moment from a man into a demigod.  
 I have obtained the medicine by which, though begotten by  
 man, I have conquered heaven.  
 Place me even for a short time where Thou hast placed  
 Dhru and Narad  
 By the support of Thy name many have been saved :  
 this is Nama's private opinion.

( 26 )

I am ardently longing for the Friend—  
 Without her calf a cow is lonely,  
 Without water a fish writheth,  
 So without God's name doth poor Nama.  
 As the calf, when let loose,  
 Sucketh his dam's teats and swalloweth her milk,  
 So Namdev hath obtained God—  
 When man meeteth the guru he showeth the Unseen—  
 As the wicked man loveth another man's wife,  
 So Nama loveth God.  
 As man's body burneth in the bright sunshine,  
 So doth poor Nama without the name of God.

( 27 )

By repeating the name of God all doubts are dispelled—  
 Repeating the name of God is the highest religious  
 exercise—

By repeating the name of God caste and lineage are effaced.

That God is the staff of the blind man.

I bow before God ! I bow before God !

By repeating God's name Death tortureth not.

God took the life of Harnakhas,

And made for Ajamal a dwelling in heaven.

The courtesan who taught her parrot to repeat God's name was saved—

That God is the apple of mine eye—

By repeating the name of God, Putana full of deceit,

The destroyer of children, was saved ;

By remembering the name of God the daughter of Drupad was saved ;

Gautam's wife though turned into a stone, was saved.

God destroyed Kesi and Kans,

And conferred the gift of life on Kalinag.

Nama representeth, by repeating the name of such a God fear and trouble depart.

( 28 )

They who worship Bhairav shall become sprites ;

They who worship Sitala shall ride on donkeys and scatter dust—

For myself I take the name of the one God ;

I would give all other gods in exchange for it.

They who repeat the name of Shiv and worship him,

Shall ride on an ox and play the drum :

They who worship the great mother Durga,

Shall be born as women instead of men

Thou callest thyself, O Durga, the primal Bhawani,

When it came to my turn to be saved, where didst thou hide thyself ?

Under the instruction of the guru, O my friend, cling to God's name—

Nama representeth, thus saith the Gita.

( 29 )

To-day I Nama saw God, I now admonish the fool—

O pandit, thy gayatri used to graze on the boor's field,



He took a stick and broke her leg; since then she hath walked lame.

O pandit I have seen thy great god Shiv going along on a white bullock.

In his consort Parbati's house a banquet for him was prepared; he killed her son.

O pandit, thy Ram Chandar—I have seen him too going along;

Having lost his wife he fought with Rawan.

The Hindus are blind, the Musalmans purblind;

The man who knoweth God is wiser than either.

The Hindus worship their temple, the Musalmans their mosque.

Nama worshipping Him who hath neither temple nor mosque.

*Ramkall*

( 30 )

A boy taketh paper, cutteth it into a kite, and flyeth it in the sky.

While conversing with his companions, he keepeth his attention on the string.

I have pierced my soul with God's name,

As the goldsmith's attention is engrossed in his work.

The queen's female servant taketh her pitcher, filleth it with water,

Converseth laughingly and pleasantly, yet keepeth her attention on the pitcher.

If the cows of a city with ten gates be let loose to graze,  
And they go grazing for even five miles, they will remember their young, and return each by her own gate.

Saith Namdev, hear, O Trilochan, when a child is laid in its cradle,

Its mother, whether engaged at home or abroad, keepeth her thoughts on her child.

( 31 )

The endless songs and poetry of the Veds, Purans, and Shashtars I will not sing;

I will play unbeaten music in the imperishable region of

God;

Ceasing to love the world I will sing of God.

Imbued with Him who is beyond expression and indestructible, I shall go to the abode of the Inscrutable One.

I will cease to hold my breath in the right or left nostril or between them both.

I deem the left and right nostril the same; I shall be blended with the light of God.

I will not go to see places of pilgrimages nor enter their water; I will not annoy men or lower animals.

The guru showed me the sixty-eight places of pilgrimage in my heart where I will bathe.

I will not have myself glorified and congratulated by my select friends.

Nama saith, my heart is dyed with God, and I shall be absorbed in Him.

( 32 )

When there was no mother, no father, no karma, and nobody;

When we were not and you were not, who was there and whence did he come ?

O God, no one hath any relation;

Man's dwelling in this world is like the perching of a bird on a tree.

When there was no moon, no sun, when there was only water and air blended together.

When there were no Shastars and no Veds, whence did Karma come ?

I have by the favour of the guru obtained God, for whom the Jogis suspend their breath, and fix their attention on the bridges of their noses, and the Bairagis wear necklaces of sweet basil,

Nama representeth, God is the primal Essence; when there is a true guru he showeth Him.

( 33 )

If one perform penance with body reversed at Banaras, and die at a place of pilgrimage; if one burn one's body with fire,

or strive to make it survive for a kalpa;

If one perform the horse sacrifice or offer secret presents of gold, all that would not be equal to the name of God.

O hypocritical man, renounce deception practise it not;  
Ever and ever take God's name.

Wert thou to go to the Ganges and the Godavari every twelfth year, bathe at Kedarnath,

And make offerings of thousands of cows at the Gomti;

Wert thou to perform millions of pilgrimages, freeze thy body in the Himalayas, all would not be equal to the name of God;

Wert thou to offer horses, elephants, women with their couches, lands, and make such gifts continually to Brahamans;

Wert thou to purify thy body and offer its weight in gold, all would not be equal to the name of God.

Look for the pure dignity of Nirvan, and be not afterwards angry with thyself, or attribute blame to the god of death.

Nama representeth, drink the real nectareous elixir of my kind Ram Chandar, the son of Jasarath Rai.

### *Mali Gaura*

( 34 )

Happy, happy that flute which Krishan played !

A very sweet unbeaten sound issueth from it.

Happy, happy that blanket which Krishan wore !

Happy, happy that ram and his fleece it was made from.

Hail, hail to thee, mother Devaki,

In whose house god, the lord of Lakshmi, was born !

Blest, blest the forest glades of Bindraban,

Where Nama's god Narayan sported,

Played his flute, herded his cows,

And was happy.

( 35 )

God, my father, hail to thee, dark complexioned Vitthal  
with the long hair !



Holding in thy hand the discus, thou didst come from heaven and save the life of the great elephant;

Thou didst save Draupadi when her clothes were being torn off her in Duhsasan's court;

Thou didst save Ahalya the wife of Gautam;

How many hast Thou purified and saved ;

Thus the lowly Namdev without caste hath entered Thy sanctuary.

( 36 )

In every heart God speaketh, God speaketh;

Doth anyone speak independently of Him ?

There is the same earth in the elephant and the ant; vessels of many kinds are made from earth.

In mobile and immobile things, in worms and moths, and in every heart God is contained.

Think of the one God who is endless; abandon all other hope.

Nama representeth; I have become free from desires; and in this state who is Lord and who is slave ?

( 37 )

When I entered the asylum of God the Bridegroom, I obtained the four stages of salvation and the four supernatural powers.

I have been saved, I have become famous through the four ages, and I have put the umbrella of praise and fame over my head.

Who hath not been saved by repeating the name of the Sovereign God ?

They who listen to the guru's instruction and associate with holy men are called saints.

On beholding the effulgence of the guru, who is conspicuous with his shell, discus, necklace, and sacrificial mark, Death becometh afraid.

Man then becometh fearless, and by the power of God thundereth forth that he hath escaped the pain on transmigration.

God gave kind Ambarik the gift of salvation, and aggrandized Babhikhan with sovereignty;

The Lord gave the nine treasures to Sudama, and made Dhru immovable in the north pole, where he is fixed to the present day;

God having assumed the body of Narsinh the man-lion, killed Harnakhas for the sake of his saint Prahlad.

Nama saith, Vishnu is in the power of the saints, and is till now standing at the door of Bali.

*Bhairo*

( 38 )

O my tongue, if thou utter not God's name,

I will break thee into a hundred pieces.

O tongue, dye thyself with God's name;

Meditating on God's name dye thyself with a good dye;

False, O My tongue, are all other occupations.

The dignity of Nirvan is only obtained through the name of God.

Wert thou to worship countless millions of other gods.

It would not be equal to repeating God's name alone

Namdev representeth, this O my tongue, and say 'O God, Thy forms are endless.'

( 39 )

God dwelleth near him

Who coveteth not another's wealth or another's wife.

I will not look at him

Who repeateth not God's name.

sAa beast is that man

Whose heart is estranged from God.

Namdev representeth, a man without a nose

Doth not look well even with the other thirty-two marks of beauty.

( 40 )

Nama having milked his brown cow took

A cup of milk and a jug of water for the idol.

'Drink milk and my mind will be at ease;  
 Otherwise my father will be angry.'  
 A golden cup filled with milk  
 Nama took and placed before the idol—  
 The saints alone abide in my heart—  
 On seeing Nama the god smiled;  
 On giving milk to the idol the worshipper Nama went  
 home,  
 And God appeared unto him.

( 41 )

I am a mad woman and God is my spouse;  
 It is for Him I decorate myself elaborately.  
 Abuse me well, abuse me well, abuse me well, O people;  
 My body and soul are for my beloved God.  
 I hold no idle discussion with any one;  
 I sip with my tongue the elixir of God.  
 Now I know in my heart that such an arrangement hath  
 been made.  
 By which I shall meet God with banners and music.  
 Whether any one give me praise or blame,  
 Nama hath met God.

( 42 )

Sometimes man is not satisfied even with milk, molasses,  
 and clarified butter;  
 Sometimes he beggeth morsels from house to house;  
 Sometimes he picketh up pulse-sweepings.  
 Remain as God hath placed thee, O brother—  
 The greatness of God cannot be described—  
 Sometimes man rideth on prancing steeds;  
 Sometimes he hath not shoes for his feet;  
 Sometimes he putteth himself to sleep on a couch with a  
 clean coverlet;  
 Sometimes he cannot get straw to sleep upon—  
 Saith Namdev, the Name alone saveth;  
 He who hath found a spiritual guide shall be delivered.

( 43 )

I went, O Lord, with laughter and gladness to Thy temple,



But while Nama was worshipping, the Brahmans forced him away.

A lowly caste is mine, O King of the Yadav, why was I born a calico-printer ?

I took up my blanket; went back,

And sat behind the temple.

As Nama repeated the praises of God

The temple turned towards His saint.

( 44 )

As food is dear to the hungry,

As the thirsty need water,

As the fool is attached to his family;

So God is dear to Nama.

Nama's love is devoted to God,

And he hath easily severed himself from the world.

As a woman is smitten with a strange man,

As a greedy man loveth wealth,

As woman is dear to the lustful.

Such is Nama's love for God.

That is real love by which God attacheth man to Him,

And by which through the guru's favour duality departeth.

Love for him who filleth my heart shall never be sundered;

Nama hath applied his heart to the true Name.

As the love between a child and its mother,

So is my soul imbued with God.

Namdev representeth I love God;

He dwelleth in my heart.

( 45 )

As a fool leaveth the wife of his home,

Hath intercourse with a strange woman, and is ruined

As the parrot is pleased on seeing the simmal,

But at last dieth clinging to it,

So the home of the sinner shall be in hell-fire;

He shall continue to burn and never have respite.

He never goeth to see where God is worshipped,

He leaveth the right path and goeth the wrong one,

He forgetteth God and suffereth transmigration,  
 He rejecteth ambrosia and eateth a load of poison.  
 When a dancing girl arriveth on the dancing floor,  
 She putteth on rich dresses, adorneth herself,  
 Danceth to measure, and modulateth her voice,  
 While death's noose is on her neck.  
 He on whose forehead such destiny hath been written,  
 Quickly entereth the protection of the guru.  
 Saith Namdev, this is my decision—  
 O saints, thus shall you obtain salvation,

( 46 )

Sanda and Marka went and complained to Harnakhas—  
 'Thy son Prahlad will not study and we are tired of  
 teaching him;

He singeth God's praises, beateth time with his hands, and  
 corrupteth all the other pupils;

He repeateth the name of God;  
 In his heart he remembereth God.'

The queen represented to her son—'The king hath reduced  
 the whole earth to subjection;

My son Prahlad, thou doest not bidding; he hath some  
 design on thee.'

A council of his enemies met and passed a resolution, 'We  
 will lengthen his life.'

They terrified him by throwing him from a height, by put-  
 ting him into water and fire, but God changed for him the  
 properties of matter.

Harnakhas enraged drew his sword, and threatened him  
 with death, saying, 'Show me who will save thee.'

Prahlad replied, God who weareth yellow clothes, the  
 Lord of the three worlds, is in the pillar.'

Upon this God tore Harnakhas with his nails, and rendered  
 demigods and men happy.

Saith Namdev, I meditate on that God who bestoweth  
 salvation.

( 47 )

The emperor said, 'Ho, you Nama,  
 Let me see the deeds of your God.'

The emperor had Nama arrested—  
 'Let me see your God Vitthal;  
 Restore to life this slaughtered cow,  
 Otherwise I will strike off thy head on the spot.'  
 'Your majesty, how can that be ?  
 No man can reanimate what is slaughtered.  
 All I could do would be of no avail;  
 What God doeth taketh place.'  
 The emperor fell into a passion,  
 And set a huge elephant at Nama.  
 Nama's mother began to cry—  
 'Why dost thou not abandon the God of the Hindus  
 and worship the God of the Musalmans ?'  
 Namdev; 'I am not thy son, nor art thou my mother;  
 Even though I perish, I will sing God's praises,'  
 The elephant struck him with his trunk,  
 But Nama was saved by the protection of God,  
 The king said, 'The Qazis and the Mullahs salute me,  
 But this Hindu trampleth on mine honour.'  
 The Hindus said, 'O king, hear our prayer  
 Take Nama's weight in gold.'  
 'If I take a bribe I shall go to hell;  
 Shall I amass wealth by abandoning my faith ?'  
 While Nama's feet were being chained  
 He sang the praises of God and beat time with his hands.  
 The Ganges and the Jamna may flow backwards,  
 But Nama will repeat God's name.  
 When seven gharis were heard to strike,  
 The Lord of the three worlds had not yet arrived.  
 God afterwards came mounted on His garur,  
 Which beat the air with its wings.  
 He took compassion on His saint,  
 And came mounted on His garur,  
 'Say but the word and I will turn the earth on its side;  
 Say but the word and I will upturn it altogether.  
 Say but the word and I will restore the dead cow to life,  
 So that every one may behold and be convinced.'  
 Nama said, 'Spancel the cow.'  
 They put the calf to her and milked her.



When the pitcher was filled with the milk the cow gave.  
 Nama took and placed it before the emperor,  
 And the time of trouble came on him.  
 He implored Namdev through the Qazis and the Mullas-  
 'Pardon me, O Hindu, I am thy cow.'  
 Nama said, 'Hear, O monarch,  
 Hath this credential been exhibited by me ?  
 The object of this miracle is  
 That thou, O emperor, shouldst walk in the paths of truth  
 and humility—  
 Namdev, God is contained in everything.'  
 The Hindus went in procession to Nama  
 And said, 'If the cow had not been restored to life,  
 People would have lost faith in thee.'  
 The fame of Namdev remained in the world;  
 He took saints with him to salvation.  
 All trouble and sorrow befell the revilers—  
 Between Nama and God there is no difference.

( 48 )

When one hath a Guru, he meeteth God;  
 When one hath a guru, he is saved;  
 When one hath a guru, he goeth to heaven;  
 When one hath a guru, while he liveth he is dead—  
 True, true, true, true, true is the guru;  
 False, false, false, false is all other service than his—  
 When one hath a guru, he inculcateth the Name;  
 When one hath a guru, he runneth not in the ten direc-  
 tions;  
 When one hath a guru, he is far removed from the five  
 evil passions;  
 When one hath a guru, he dieth not of grief;  
 When one hath a guru, he obtaineth the ambrosial word;  
 When one hath a guru, he heareth the story of the  
 Ineffable;  
 When one hath a guru, his body becometh immortal;  
 When one hath a guru, he uttereth the Name;  
 When one hath a guru, he seeth the three worlds;  
 When one hath a guru, he knoweth how to reach the  
 exalted position;

When one hath a guru, his head toucheth heaven;  
 When one hath a guru, he is ever congratulated;  
 When one hath a guru, he is ever estranged from the  
 world;

When one hath a guru, he abandoneth slander;  
 When one hath a guru, he deemeth evil and good the  
 same;

When one hath a guru, good destiny is written on his  
 forehead;

When one hath a guru, evil passions seduce not his body;  
 When one hath a guru, the temple turneth towards him;  
 When one hath a guru, his hut is rebuilt for him;  
 When one hath a guru, his bed cometh forth from the  
 river;

When one hath a guru, he batheth in the sixty-eight places  
 of pilgrimage;

When one hath a guru, the quoit of Vishnu is impressed  
 on his body;

When one hath a guru, he performeth the twelve adorati-  
 ons;

When one hath a guru, all poisons become wholesome;  
 When one hath a guru, doubts are dispelled;  
 When one hath a guru, he escapeth from Death;  
 When one hath a guru, he crosseth over the terrible ocean.  
 When one hath a guru, he suffereth not transmigration;  
 When one hath a guru, he obtaineth the advantages of the  
 eighteen Purans;

When one hath a guru, he obtaineth the eighteen loads  
 of vegetables.

Without the guru, there is no resting place—  
 Namdev hath entered the guru's protection.

( 49 )

Come, God, the Qalandar  
 Wearing the dress of an Abdali.

The firmament is the hat on Thy head, the seven nether  
 regions Thy slippers;

All animals with skins are Thy temples; thus art Thou  
 decked out, O God !

The fifty-six millions of clouds are Thy robes and the sixteen thousand queens of Krishan Thy waistbands;

The eighteen roads of vegetables are Thy clubs, the whole world is Thy salver;

Nama's body is Thy mosque, his heart Thy priest who tranquilly prayeth.

O Thou with and without form, Thou who art wedded to lady Lakshmi,

While I was worshipping Thou hadst my cymbals taken from me; to whom shall I complain ?

Nama's Lord is the Searcher of all hearts, and wandereth in every land.

*Basant*

( 50 )

If a servant run away when his master is in trouble,

The servant shall not be long-lived, he shall bring shame on his father and mother's family,

I will not abandon Thy service, O Lord, even though men scoff at me,

Thy lotus feet dwell in my heart,

As man accepteth death to secure wealth,

So the saints relinquish not God's name.

Pilgrimages to the Ganges, Gaya, and Godavari are worldly acts;

If God be pleased, Nama shall be His worshipper.

( 51 )

The waves of covetousness sound like a cataract, my body is drowning therein, O God.

Float me over the ocean of the world, O God, float me over, Father Vitthal.

In this gale I cannot steer my boat, I cannot reach Thine opposite shore, O God.

Be compassionate and cause me to meet a true guru, take me across, O God.

Nama saith, I do not even know how to swim; give me Thine arm, give me Thine arm, O God.



( 52 )

As an ant draggeth along a bit of cow dung,  
 So this cart fashioned from dust and seed  
 At first moveth slowly;  
 But afterwards the world driveth it with a rod.  
 My darling soul goeth to the wash-tank.  
 The washerman dyed with love washeth it with the water  
 of God's name;

My heart is fascinated with God's feet.  
 Saith Nama, Thou, O God, who art everywhere diffused,  
 Have compassion on Thy worshipper !  
 O man, why hast thou gone into a forest of evil passions ?  
 Thou hast partaken of the thieves' plant and gone  
 astray.

A fish abideth in water.  
 And taketh no notice of the deadly net;  
 It swalloweth the bait to gratify its palate,  
 So man is bound by the love of gold and woman.  
 When the bees hoard up a great store of honey,  
 Man taketh the honey and throweth dirt on the bees.  
 The cow storeth up milk for her calf,  
 But the milkman tieth the calf up by the neck and milketh  
 the cow.

For wealth man maketh great endeavours;  
 That wealth he taketh and burieth in the ground.  
 He amasseth a great deal, but the fool understandeth  
 not.

That his riches shall remain on the earth and his body  
 become dust.

He burneth with great lust, wrath and avarice;  
 He never joineth the company of holy men.  
 Saith Namdev, seek God's protection;  
 Become fearless and worship God.

( 54 )

Why layest Thou not a wager with me, O God, that there  
 is nothing but Thee ?

The servant is known from his master, and the master  
 from his servant; this is my game with Thee.

Thou art God and Thine own temple, Thou worshipping Thyself.

From water proceed waves, from waves water, though both have different names in conversation.

Thou art the Singer, Thou art the Dancer. Thou art the Trumpet-player--

Saith Namdev, Thou art my Lord ; Thy servant is imperfect; Thou art perfect.

( 55 )

The man who worshippeth none but Me is in Mine own image;

The sight of him even for a moment removeth man's three fevers, and his touch extriceth man from the pit of family life.

A saint can release one bound by Me, but I cannot release one bound by a saint.

If a saint seize and bind Me at any time, I can say naught to him.

I am bound by men's merits; I am the life of all things, but My slave is My life.

O Namdev, My love shall shine over him whose heart hath such faith.

*Malar*

( 56 )

Serve God who is unknowable and stainless.

Give me, O God, the gift of service for which saints beg.

God's palace hath pavilions on every side; in heaven is His gorgeous dwelling and mansion;

He filleth equally the seven regions of the world.

In His palace dwelleth the ever youthful Lakshmi;

The moon and sun are His lamps, the wretched mountebank Death, who levieth a tax on all, His Judge

Such a Monarch is God.

In His mansion Brahma with four faces who created the whole world is the fashioning potter;

In His mansion enthusiast Shiv, the world's teacher,

preacheth pure divine knowledge;

At His gate are the mace-bearers Evil and Good, and the  
accountants Chitr and Gupt;

Dharmraj the destroyer is His porter—

Such a Monarch is God.

In His mansion are the heralds, the heavenly dancers,  
the rikhis, and the poor minstrels who melodiously sing;

All the Shastars are His actors, His theatre is stupendous,  
Kings sweetly sing His praises,

The winds are His waving chauris,

His handmaiden is Maya who hath vanquished the world,

His fire-place is the blind pit of hell fire,

Such a monarch is the Lord of the three worlds.

In His mansion the tortoise is a bed; Vasuki with its  
thousand hoods the cords to bind it.

His flower-girls is the eighteen loads of vegetables; His  
water-carrier the ninety-six millions of clouds;

The Ganges is the perspiration of His feet,

The seven seas His water-stands,

All living things His water vessels—

Such a Monarch is the Lord of the three worlds—

At His mansion wait Arjan, Dhru, Prahlad, Ambarik,

Narad, Nejai, the Sidhs, the Budhas, the heralds, and the  
heavenly dancers who extol Him and play before Him.

In God's mansion are so many living beings.

Within all of whom His diffused

Namdev representeth, seek God's protection,

Whose standard all his saints bear.

( 57 )

Forget me not, forget me not,

Forget me not, O God !

Those misled Brahmans of the temple were all furious  
with me;

Calling me a Sudar they beat me and turned me out ; what  
shall I do, Father Vitthal ?

If Thou give me salvation when I am dead, nobody will be  
aware of it ; save me now.

If these pandits call me low, then, O God, Thine honour  
will be in the background.



Thou who art called the compassionate and merciful altogether unrivalled is Thine arm—

God turned round the front of the temple towards Nama, and its back towards the pandits.

*Kanra*

( 58 )

God the Searcher of hearts,  
Like a body reflected in a mirror,  
Dwelleth in every heart; nothing produceth an effect or impression on Him.

He is free from all entanglements and devoid of caste.

When one looketh at one's own face in the water, the water can produce no impression on it,

So nothing can produce an impression on Vitthal, Nama's Lord.

*Prabhati*

( 59 )

Only the heart knoweth its own state; either keep thy secret to thyself, or tell it to a man of understanding.

Since I repeat the name of God, the Searcher of hearts, why should I be afraid ?

God, the Lord of the earth, hath penetrated me.

My God is diffused in every place.

Shops are only phantoms. shopkeepers are only phantoms, cities are only phantoms.

The different grades of men who inhabit the earth are phantoms, and the world wandereth in error.

When the heart is imbued with the guru's instruction, duality is easily effaced.

All things are subject to the Commander's order; He is fearless and regardeth all alike.

He who knoweth and worshippeth the Supreme Being, uttereth words of divine knowledge.

Nama saith, I have obtained the Life of the world in my heart; He is invisible and wonderful.

( 60 )

God was in the beginning before the ages and in every age;  
His end is not known.

God is contained in everything uninterruptedly; thus is  
His form described.

The unbeaten strain resoundeth for him who repeateth  
God's name—

Happy is my God—

The sandal-tree by its perfume is pleasant to the other  
trees of the forest;

Through God who was before all things and who perfum-  
eth like sandal, common wood becometh sandal.

Thou, O God art as the philosopher's stone; I am as the  
iron; in Thine association I have become gold.

Thou art compassionate, Thou art the jewel and the  
ruby.

Nama hath been absorbed in the True One.

( 61 )

The inscrutable Being invented a play—

God is concealed in every heart,

No one knoweth the nature of the soul's light

What we overselves have done Thou knowest.

As an earthen vessel is produced from clay,

So Vitthal created the world.

The soul's entanglements depend on its acts;

It is itself responsible for what it hath done,

Namdev representeth, the soul obtaineth the result of its  
thoughts;

The soul which always remaineth fixed on the Inscrutable  
One, becometh immortal.

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